

Conversation with the Creator as an Exercise of Care of the Self

By
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Two Ethiopians are engaged in a passionate conversation on the idea of forgiveness and how it applies to the jailed Derg officials. The conversation leads both to an impasse, and they both say that they are going to leave the matter to the Creator. Both of them close their eyes while praying at church and they beg the Creator to listen to them, and so the loving Creator does.

The first Ethiopian reports to God that not all the jailed member of the Derg belong to the same fabric. That they are unique individuals and that he could think of at least six types.

There are (1) those who are naturally vicious and almost joyously carried out the rapes, murders, and lootings of Ethiopians;

(2) Those who carried out orders afraid that if they did not, they will be the ones who will be gone;

(3) Those who carried out their tasks but took the pain and the regret out on their families at night.

(4) The confused ones who did not even know what they were doing but did it anyway.

(5) Those who prayed to the Lord to free them from this burden, but the Lord did not immediately answer.

(6) Those who believed in the ideology of the Derg and performed their tasks with righteousness as love of country

Finally,

(7) The mentally insane but did not even know it.

It is only the jailed individuals who know with absolute clarity which type they are. Only they know. More importantly, the Creator himself knows. Of these six types, it is those who are in (1) who have engaged in acts which cannot be forgiven by human beings.

Only the Creator can forgive the unforgivable, although true forgiveness is forgiving the unforgivable.

The young man then breaks to tears when he is haunted by the image of his wife whose limbs were quartered when she was violently pulled out by a Derg soldier, and he now wonders, if he was the (1), who performed his task joyously; or perhaps, (7), who did not know what he was doing.

He asks the Creator, what he should do. When he thinks of forgiveness, he tells the creator, he is saddled by immense confusion, about the different types. Surely, as a Christian, he must forgive, but those whom he should forgive as the list about indicated are of various kinds, and that they merit different kinds of forgiveness.

The Creator finally speaks and says, dear Son. Do not worry. You must know, however, that there are two kinds of justice and forgiveness. The first form is human. The second form is Transcendental. Humans must practice the first form. The Creator practices the second form. Your self-imposed duty is to forgive all of them with different intensities and measures, and leave the rest to me, your Creator.

He assured him that he appreciated his careful reflection and that ultimate justice and forgiveness will be dispensed in the other world and that none of these members are going to escape the just punishment. The young Ethiopian is satisfied and looks up to the sky and thanks the Creator for speaking to him.

The other Ethiopian who has been quiet also speaks to the Lord and says to him that he cannot forgive these criminals and that the Creator must punish them here and now, and that he wants the punishment, if possible, in public squares for all the surviving families to witness to their hearts delight. He tells God that he is hurt and angry, and cannot forgive or forget. Infact, he is afraid that if these criminals are released, they may start another movement and do it all over again. He says that he is not even sure that these criminals have repented, and that they might even think that they have been unjustly jailed and may become human rights activists. He tells the Lord that he does not trust them and that the only solution is their eradication from the face of the earth.

The Lord listens, patiently, and acknowledges his hurt and understands his mistrust, but he advises the Ethiopian to reflect on the matter by using reason, since he senses that his emotion is governing his behavior and his spiritedness is overcoming him. He advises him to allow reason to govern emotion and to silence spiritedness.

The Lord tells him that he understands his passion and his quest for revenge. He assures him that he would not be human, if he did not feel this passion, but he must try to subdue it with reason. He reminds him that he endowed him with reason precisely because he knows that he is an emotive being, a part of his humanity. The revenge that he feels deeply is a just one. It is a quest for justice, and that he (Lord) will dispense with this justice. The Creator is aware that there is evil in the world, and that it may still be hidden in the dark. He will take care of that also. The Creator gently begs him to trust him and to be patient with the Lord's ways. His moral duty is to trust him and forgive the officials for now. Justice will be fully served in time, after the human forgiveness is performed here, in accordance with the human form of forgiveness.

The Lord tells him that his duty is to forgive, and to understand that the Lord will indeed judge the members by a higher standard of the Law, that he has created. He reminds him

that the Lord is not a revengeful creator but a Just and forgiving one. The Lord asks him, if I can forgive, why is that you cannot?

The Ethiopian is challenged, and he becomes still. In stillness, he thinks deeply, and this comportment enormously pleased the Creator, and he expressed his happiness to the Ethiopian, without words.

Dear Lord, do you remember this heart-breaking story.

“The former Makalawi prisoners that we interviewed said that late on the night of October 7, 1979, a truck arrived in the prison compound and twenty prisoners were offloaded. The night was cold and many of the new prisoners had wrapped themselves in blankets. They were put in holding cells apart from the main cellblock. The next morning, at 10-20 minutes intervals, the guards called out each of the twenty new prisoners by name and, one by one, they were marched away. Ten Makalawi prisoners were similarly called out and taken away. The thirty men never returned, and by late afternoon rumors began to circulate that they had all been executed.”

How can I remember it, since I cause everything? Do not worry; they will pay a prize in my kingdom, where every act is judged perfectly. All the victims of the Derg’s terror will stand in higher judgment.

For now, the Creator gently asks him to consider for the second time, is forgiving; indeed forgiving the unforgivable acts of the imprisoned Derg members. They will be judged perfectly by the Perfect Lord, who has his own form of justice and forgiveness.

My son, the Lord says,

“ True forgiveness is forgiving the unforgivable”.