Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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“You will not be released until you have paid the last penny” (Matthew 5:26).

Ez 18:21-28; *Mt 5:20-26*

Anyone who has struggled with resentment or the need to apologize knows how deep and all-consuming the process can be. If we don't resolve it quickly, it will keep us awake at night and intrude on our thoughts during the day. Even if we are able to repress it, the inner conversation – like a court transcript – will move into the unconscious and pop back up into our thoughts as a kind of default setting. People who have buried a serious unresolved conflict with a friend or family member will have to deal with it later, often after someone has died. Or it returns in psychosomatic fashion as illness.

Jesus understood well the inner workings of the human heart. This is why he tells his disciples to make sure their morality goes deeper than the appearance of righteousness he witnessed in the scribes and Pharisees. They kept the literal commandments not to kill or commit adultery, but they did not root out the underlying lust and anger that rule the unconverted heart. Jesus uses the example of two litigants on their way to court to illustrate. Settle quickly and early or the conflict between you will ensnare you and imprison you in your own anger and inability to forgive. The "last penny" must be paid before you will be released.

Forgiveness is the hardest work of all, perhaps because we can hide and deny the need, even from ourselves. But it never goes away until we have turned and addressed it honestly and done the work of resolving it. Then we will know the peace that surpasses all understanding.

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