

IMPOSSIBLE FORGIVENESS

by Paul Meier, M.D.

I talked to a very sweet college girl, a graduate student, who was working on a project in the ghettos of New York in preparation for the mission field. She reached out to give a little money to a homeless person and he kidnapped her and raped her for four days. She was now so traumatized that she became psychotically depressed, and was having visual hallucinations and believing delusions. But with modern day medications and excellent therapy at our Meier Day Program, I assured her and her family that she would be back in touch with reality in about a week—probably much sooner. Sometimes patients clear up within an hour of taking powerful antipsychotic medications. It is so wonderful to be a Christian psychiatrist in this era, and to be able to use science, psychiatric techniques and spirituality to bring about dramatic recoveries quickly.

But when she is totally back to normal in her thinking, she will still have to deal with forgiveness. Her rapist is not worth her ruining the rest of her life. But the rest of her life will be ruined until she forgives. Bitterness toward him will continually deplete her brain chemicals and keep her depressed and anxious and possibly even psychotic until she releases her bitterness and turns vengeance over to God. We do not want her to condone what the rapist did. I hope they catch him and he is appropriately punished. King David said in Psalm 68 that God hates it when one of his children gets abused, and he will take the abuser and smash his head against the rocks some day. But God would forgive the rapist if he genuinely repented and was not faking it, and God would know if he is genuine.

The famous poet, Alexander Pope, once said, “To err is human, but to forgive is Divine.” All humans err, or make mistakes. But I am convinced Pope was right, that often it is humanly impossible to forgive without help from Above. To forgive sometimes requires Divine intervention. So if you are having trouble forgiving someone in your past, or in your present, or even yourself, ask the ONE who created you to give you assistance. Remember that “to forgive” requires the Divine.