

FORGIVENESS

Forgiving Those Who Have Wronged You Matthew 18:21-35

One of the strongest messages presented in Scripture is *forgiveness*. The Bible is the story of how God *forgives*. It begins in **Genesis** and continues through **Revelation**. If *forgiveness* is one of the central themes...where do you suppose the *enemy might attack* you as God's children? Through *forgiveness!* When *unforgiveness* and *bitterness* rule our hearts, we are moving backwards in our relationships with people and God...and we are opening ourselves up to Satan's attack.

Christian's don't like to admit that they are *bitter*. We would rather say...*"I've been hurt"* or *"I have resentment"* or *"I have a caution or concern"*.

Forgiveness is a *choice*...not a *feeling*. It is an act of the *will!* When it comes to *forgiving* someone who has *offended* us, we must act in obedience, even when the feelings aren't there. It's forgiving *again...and again...and again*...whenever the enemy tries to bring it up...you *forgive again!*

THREE ASPECTS OF FORGIVENESS:

- **GETTING Forgiveness**
- **GIVING Forgiveness**
- **Forgiving YOURSELF**

The only way to cure bitterness...*Trust God*...trust that He is at work in and through the circumstance that has happened.

To see that which has happened...as a "GOD THING"...that it is a "GOOD THING."

Remember...It doesn't mean that you have to like it. It doesn't even mean that it was *"right."* But it does mean that you are willing to accept it as if it is *"Unto the Lord."*

STEPS OF ACTIONS:

- **REPENT**...Confess the sin of bitterness.
- **RECONCILE**...Show *mercy* by *forgiving* your offender.
- **RELEASE**...Release them to God so He can deal with them.
- **RECLAIM**...Ask God to regain *"Surrendered ground."*
- **RESTORE**...Mend and repair relationships.

GIVING FORGIVENESS:

I. **RECONCILE**...*Show mercy by giving forgiveness.*

"For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions"

~Matthew 6:14-15

What would happen if God took the same approach towards forgiving you, that you have taken towards forgiving others?

God's mercy is everlasting and has given us salvation and forgiveness. In offering our thanks for these unmerited gifts, shouldn't we be willing to also offer forgiveness to others? There is no possible way to compare our sin debt to God, with another's sin debt to us. Yet, we can find ourselves thanking God for His forgiveness, while still withholding forgiveness from others.

"Be gentle with one another, sensitive. Forgive one another as quickly and thoroughly as God in Christ forgave you."

~Ephesians 4:32
(The Message)

Forgive...literally means *“to let go”, “to let go from one’s power”, or “to send away”*. To forgive means *“to release from bondage or imprisonment.”* Several times Jesus emphasized that forgiving others is central in receiving our own forgiveness. Could you be limiting the forgiveness God might extend to you?

“Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father Who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions.”

~Mark 11:25

The next time someone offends you, remember that you, too, had to be forgiven. The key is to stop focusing on what they have done *to* you and start focusing on what God has done *for* you!

- **THE CHOICE**...*Forgiveness* is a *choice*...*Forgiveness* is not a *feeling*...it’s an act of the *will*! When it comes to forgiving someone who has offended us, we must act in obedience, even when the feelings aren’t there. It’s forgiving *again...and again...and again*...whenever the enemy tries to bring it up...you *forgive again*!

“Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying ‘I repent,’ forgive him.”

~Luke 17:3-4

The apostles responded by saying to the Lord, **“Increase our faith.”**

“Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

~Ephesians 4:32

- **THE CONDITION**...It’s not admitting that what they did was right...it’s saying that you won’t hold the sin against them anymore. Many times people want to give *conditional forgiveness*.
- **THE EMOTION**...It’s not when you feel like the person is sincere. It’s an act of obedience on your part.
- **THE PERSPECTIVE**...It’s not forgetting the sin. It is saying that *“I will remember the sin against you no more.”*

...It means that you will never raise the issue again...it’s a dead issue.

...It means that you commit to tell no one.

Not forgiving...means that you are taking the place of God. You are now playing God. Either *forgive*...or get *bitter* (**Hebrews 12:15**).

II. RELEASE...*Willingness to let God deal with them.*

“Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.”

~Romans 12:19

- **Release MENTALLY**...Releasing is not forgetting... Don’t deny what has happened. People will try and tell you not to think about it. This actually makes things worst. Have you ever tried to NOT think about something? The more you try and not think about it, the more you think about it. Learn to thank God for the memories!
- **Release your WILL**...Release your expectations...as to *how* God will work in their life.
- **Release EMOTIONALLY**...Forgive from the heart.

III. RECLAIM...*Surrendered Ground.*

Five Symptoms Of An Unforgiving Spirit:

1. You can't stand to be around **CERTAIN PEOPLE**.
2. You want to **STRIKE OUT** at people when certain subjects are discussed.
3. You lose your **TEMPER** over little things.
4. You struggle with **GUILT** over things that happened in the past.
5. You find yourself **HATING** the very ones you should **LOVE** the most.

FORGIVING YOURSELF: *Guilt vs. Grieving*

"I can't"...hogwash! What you are saying is that given the same circumstances, you would do the same thing over again. What you have is *lack of repentance*...or at best *incomplete repentance*. You aren't grieved over your sin...you're only sorry that you got caught.

IV. RESTORE...*Results Of Forgiveness...All three areas.*

- A **CLEAR CONSCIENCE**.

If someone you know was making a list of people who had hurt or offended them and never asked their forgiveness...would you be on that list?

"...Fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, which come have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith."

~I Timothy 1:18-19

- A **LIFESTYLE** Change. ([Ephesians 4:26-32](#))

If a change in your lifestyle doesn't take place...then getting forgiveness is just a cover for doing something you are always going to do any way. It results in a life-

style of sin. (*Alcoholic...abuser...adultery...stealing...lying...etc.*).

- Restored **WORSHIP**.
- Restored **PHYSICALLY**.

"When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long."

~Psalm 32:3

"For my iniquities are gone over my head; as a heavy burden they weigh too much for me. My wounds grow foul and fester because of my folly. I am bent over and greatly bowed down; I go mourning all day long. For my loins are filled with burning, and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am benumbed and badly crushed; I groan because of the agitation of my heart."

~Psalm 38:4-8

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will be converted to You. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation; then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness."

~Psalm 51:10-14

- Ability to **LOVE**.

"The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."

~I Timothy 1:5

- **PRAYER LIFE** unhindered.

“Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also for give you your transgressions.”

~Mark 11:25