

Forgiveness: An Important Step in Healing

"Forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us."

When it comes to forgiveness the Holy Spirit speaks to each of our hearts and will show us our areas of resentment, unforgiveness, and bitterness if we make the sincere effort to identify them. We are often reminded to forgive all who have harmed, wronged or hurt us, otherwise our prayers are confronted by the barriers of harmful attitudes at a time that we need a clear open channel for our prayers to focus into and be heard.

Mark 11:25 states that *when you stand in prayer, forgive whatever you have against anybody, so your Father in heaven may forgive your failings too.* Forgiving is an act of will and not merely an emotional feeling; let go of the emotion and make a determined act of will and ask Jesus, if need be, to help you through any difficulty in letting go. Jesus was explicit with the disciples: *Then Peter went up to him and said, 'Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? As often as seven times?' Jesus answered, 'Not seven, I tell you, but seventy-seven times.'*¹

Sometimes people will say, "I forgive you" but I won't forget; this however is not appropriate because it allows the person to harbor resentments which are also hindrances to prayer. *Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ,*² *and as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do.*³

You may believe that others "owe you" because of the hurt or harm they have caused and you may be right in that regard; for example, spouses may believe they haven't been treated rightly by the other, children may resent parents, and parents may not even be on speaking terms with some of their children. However, I need to ask myself how do their wrongs compare to the wrongs I have amassed in my lifetime in relation to God's goodness and holiness?

The parable of the unforgiving servant⁴ gives us a perspective in this regard. Forgiven much debt the hard-hearted servant refused to forgive a relatively little

¹ Matthew 18:21-22

² Ephesians 4:31-32

³ Colossians 3:13

⁴ Matthew 18:23-35

amount from another, and when the master heard of this he was greatly angered and *handed him over to the torturers till he should pay all his debt.*

The comparable situation may be likened to being forgiven a \$1,000,000 debt and in turn refusing to forgive another a mere \$20. No small wonder the master was angered!

And what is the spiritual meaning of being handed over to the torturers? They are evil spirits who can attach themselves to hard-hearted persons who simply refuse to forgive. Such spirits are thought to be legalistic, brought into play by resentments and bitterness which enables them to continually create problems and hardships for us in their sinister ways. A forgiving attitude will cut their attachment in our lives.

The essence of this is simply that our forgiveness brings God's forgiveness which is immensely greater than anything we can imagine. ..greater even than the comparison to the \$1,000,000 to the \$20. As I once heard someone say this kind of action is clearly enlightened self-interest!

If you still think your forgiveness of someone is difficult, then think of this: *When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him and the criminals there, one on his right, the other on his left.[Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."]*⁵

*Lord Jesus, I lay aside the hurt, harm, and wrong anyone has committed against me, and I forgive them as you forgive me. Remind me, if needed, of resentments and bitterness I still may hold onto against others and guide me as I renounce all such grievances. As you remind us, "Forgive and you will be forgiven."*⁶

Amen

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⁵ Luke 23:33-34

⁶ Luke 6:37