



TODD LEVIN MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

A monthly teaching publication to our partners and friends

FORGIVENESS UNLOCKS GOD'S GRACE

Dear Partners and Friends,

There is one area where the enemy runs wild and has a field day, it's the area of unforgiveness. Even satan knows the damage that this can cause, not only to the offender, but also to the offended. When we as Christians learn to "turn the other cheek" as Jesus pointed out, then life will be so much sweeter. No more of that sick feeling you have when "so-and-so" walks into the room. Even just hearing their name can make you upset. This is a direct result of unforgiveness. Is it any wonder why so many have problems with ulcers, and other areas in their body? Somewhere down the line offense has been taken.

The longer we harbor that unforgiveness, the deeper it becomes. It's like a root that can go down deep if we let it. Not realizing the harm and destruction that unforgiveness can bring, it actually can become a lifestyle for many.

When the Apostle Paul was writing to the church in Corinth the first time, he addressed an individual within the body who was living in sin because the leadership left it go too long.

"It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this?"

1 Corinthians 5:1-2 (NIV)

By the time Paul wrote the second letter to the Corinthian believers, the man who he referred to in I Corinthian chapter 5 already repented. But like many Christians, they were not ready to forgive and receive this individual back into their congregation. Therefore Paul had to be very clear to this church.

"Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him. For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any

thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ; Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.”

II Corinthians 2:6-11

The part I want to focus at is Paul’s last sentence. “*Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.*” What device was Paul referring to in this instance?

Unforgiveness. Also notice that when we operate in unforgiveness, then satan has an advantage over us. Paul says we are not to be ignorant. This is exactly where Christians are missing it – in their ignorance of the dangers and harmful destruction that unforgiveness brings to both parties involved.

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”

Hosea 4:6

Have we forgotten that our faith cannot and will not work in an environment of unforgiveness? Faith only works by love, not by hate, animosity, ill will and bitterness. (Gal 5:6)

“Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.”

Mark 11:24-26

UNFORGIVENESS POISONS YOUR FAITH

There are many hindrances to faith, however unforgiveness is the only one that Jesus mentioned because it is the number one hindrance to faith. If you’re doing all you know and still have unanswered prayer, then ask yourself, "Am I holding something against someone?"

The Word of God is very clear when it talks about forgiveness. If you don’t forgive, you won’t be forgiven. You see, your forgiveness is based on you forgiving them, not on them forgiving you! It’s only when we forgive, that we can receive forgiveness.

“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors... For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

Matthew 6:12, 14-15

“Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.”

Luke 6:37

YOU MUST FORGIVE AT THE LEVEL IN WHICH YOU WERE FORGIVEN

“Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.”

Colossians 3:13

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

Ephesians 4:31-32

What we need to realize is that strife and unforgiveness violates the very grace of God. Grace is the very factor that was extended to you. Through grace you receive your forgiveness from God. It was through grace that we have been saved, accepted and forgiven. This is exactly what you violate when you decide not to forgive. In doing so, you’re condemning yourself. For if you “forgive not,” then you cannot be forgiven. Jesus gave us His standing by grace (**Romans 5:2,21**). Then through the same grace that He bestowed on us (ex. forgiveness), is what we violate by getting into strife.

“Well,” you may be thinking, “sure, but you don’t realize what so-and-so has done to me, or said to me. They have ruined my life. Am I supposed to still forgive them, knowing the damage they created cannot be reversed?”

Let’s look at a parable that Jesus gave over in **Matthew 18:21-35** and see just how far do we have to forgive. What does God expect from us?

“Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” “Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. “The servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. “But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded. “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.’ “But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.”

Matthew 18:21-35 (NIV)

First I want to point out that the Word of God actually gives us a numerical value concerning how often we are to forgive: seventy times seven (**vs22**) which means 490 times a day. If we do a little arithmetic it looks like this:

$$\begin{array}{rcl} 490 \text{ (daily)} \times 7 \text{ (days)} & = & 3430 \text{ a week} \\ \times 52 \text{ (weeks)} & \longrightarrow & 178,360 \text{ yearly} \end{array}$$

(**Note:** that's every 2 minutes. 16 hours a day or 30x per hour)

If I have to forgive this many times a year that means God has to forgive me that much a year and daily. Can you see that God has given us such a tremendous margin for forgiveness that we have no excuse for not forgiving another?

In this parable we have a king who is owed 10,000 talents, which is approximately \$9,600,000, by a man who cannot pay. And another individual who owes his friend 100 pence which is equivalent to \$16.00, and also cannot pay.

Vs 24 - 10,000 talents debt

1-talent = 6,000 denarii

1-denarii = .16centsordinary days wage

1-month = \$4.80 (30 days x .16)

1-year = \$57.60

Lifetime = \$57.60 x 70 yr = \$4032.00.....approx. a little over 4 talents.

Remember now, he owed 10,000 talents which equals: \$9,600,000. Nearly a ten million dollar debt. In other words, a debt so big it would have been impossible to ever repay it. He would have to live to be 2,381 years old in order to pay off this debt.

Let's look at us for just a moment – humanity. God has forgiven humanity our great debt of sin, a debt so big it would have been impossible for us to ever repay it. Jesus is saying, "*Your debt of sin against God is greater than any debt anyone will ever owe you.*" **What someone has done to you or wronged you is no comparison to the sin, "wrong" that mankind did to His Creator.** It would be like comparing \$10,000,000 to \$16.00. There is no comparison, no match, it's unfair. Jesus shows us how the forgiven servant who could never repay his debt, made a decision not to forgive his fellow servant and instead had him thrown into prison.

“And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.”

Matthew 18:30

Unbelievable isn't it? Yet Christians do it all the time. Though they have been forgiven, yet choose not to forgive others, but rather to hold grudges, stay mad and angry with them. When

we refuse to forgive another person, we actually place that individual in bondage, into a spiritual prison. And every so often, we take them out and slap them. For example, when their name comes up, immediately those feelings of anger begin to rise up within you, and you cast out a few comments about so-and-so. Not words of edification to build up their reputation, but words of condemnation, with the intention of tearing down and destroying their reputation.

When you keep someone in your cage of unforgiveness, God can't get to them until you've given them over to God. Unforgiveness on our part binds the hands of God to work in the life of that one that we have ought against.

Our attitude becomes a hindrance to the Holy Spirit. How can we be expecting Him to start to work in the heart of the one we are binding by our unforgiving spirit? Once we forgive, the Father's hands are loosed to begin a work and bring conviction to the one that has wronged you. Only He knows what corrections must be made. But unforgiveness doesn't stop there. By your decision not to forgive, you too are thrown into a "spiritual prison." Look at **Matthew 18:34,35**.

“And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.”

In reality it is not God who turns us over to the tormentors, we turn ourselves over when we refuse to walk in love and forgiveness. The only way to get out of the prison you're in is to remedy the strife situation, and then your faith will work again.

WHAT GOD EXPECTS FROM US

I want you to look at verse 33 with me. ***“Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?”*** This is God's question to each of us.

We are to forgive at the same level that we are forgiven by God. Once we realize how much God has forgiven us, we can freely forgive others. Forgive as often as you want to be forgiven. If you have trouble forgiving, ask God to give you a revelation of Calvary and the price He paid for your forgiveness. God has removed our sin as far as the east is from the west. (***Psalms 103:12***)

Someone said, “But I can't forgive them.” Yes you can! Forgiveness is an act of your will, not an emotion. However, you can't walk in this forgiveness unless you've been forgiven. But because you've been forgiven, you must by nature of the forgiveness that you have received, be willing to forgive others in the very same way, regardless of how you feel. Forgiveness is a commandment, not an invitation.

WHO SHOULD I FORGIVE?

Your friends, family, enemies and even yourself. Forgiving ourselves usually seems to be the toughest task. When we disappoint ourselves, how quick we are to condemn. Unforgiveness can be expressed not only toward others, but also inwardly aimed right at you! RECEIVE God's forgiveness today regardless of your past. There is forgiveness available in Jesus. He forgives all of your sin. (**Psalms 103:2,3**)

HOW CAN YOU HAVE A RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARD EVERYBODY ALL THE TIME?

Make a decision in your will at the beginning of every day to forgive others as God has forgiven you. It's that simple!

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I release right now, every person who has upset, hurt, and offended me. By an act of my will, I choose to forgive them right now. And Lord, I also thank you for forgiving me. I know I have been made clean by the precious blood of Jesus. I receive your forgiveness right now. I choose this day, that no matter what people do to me, I know how I am going to respond – I will forgive them. I set myself in agreement with your Word, because I have received forgiveness from you. I can and I will forgive others. In Jesus' name! Amen.

Your Friends and Partners,

Todd & Eva