

*The Power
of
Forgiveness*



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Chapter 1

The Strength of Forgiveness

The following are Scripture passages relating to forgiveness and how we are to react when we are wronged:

Matthew 6:12 and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Matthew 6:14 for if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

15. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Jesus gives a startling warning about forgiveness: if we refuse to forgive others, God will also refuse to forgive us. Why? Because when we don't forgive others, we are denying our common ground as sinners in need of God's forgiveness. God's forgiveness of sin is not the direct result of our forgiving others, but it is based on our realizing what forgiveness means (see Ephesians 4:32). It is easy to ask God for forgiveness, but difficult to grant it to others. Whenever we ask God to forgive us for sin, we should ask ourselves, "Have I forgiven the people who have wronged me?"

Mark 11:25 and whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

Matthew 18:21 Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"

22. Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

23. "Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.

24. "And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed

him ten thousand talents.

25. “But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.

26. “The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’

27. “Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

28. “But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’

29. “So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’

30. “And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt.

31. “So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done.

32. “Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.

33. ‘Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’

34. “And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.

35. “So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”

The rabbis taught that people should forgive those who offended them — but only three times. Peter, trying to be especially generous, asked Jesus if seven (the “perfect” number) was enough times to forgive someone. But Jesus answered, “Seventy-seven times,” meaning that we shouldn’t even keep track of how many times we forgive someone. We should always forgive those who are truly repentant, no matter how many times they ask.

In Bible times, serious consequences awaited those who could not pay their debts. A person lending money could seize the borrower who couldn’t pay and force him or his family to work until the debt was paid. The debtor could also be thrown into prison, or his family could be sold into slavery to help pay off the debt.

It was hoped that the debtor, while in prison, would sell off his land-holdings or that relatives would pay the debt. If not, the debtor could remain in prison for life.

Because God has forgiven all our sins, we should not withhold forgiveness from others. Realizing how completely Christ has forgiven us should produce a free and generous attitude of forgiveness toward others. When we don't forgive others, we are setting ourselves outside and above Christ's law of love.

Jesus (on the cross) said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." Luke 23:34.

Jesus asked God to forgive the people who were putting him to death— Jewish leaders, Roman politicians and soldiers, bystanders — and God answered that prayer by opening up the way of salvation even to Jesus' murderers. The Roman centurion and soldiers who witnessed the crucifixion said, "Surely he was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54). Soon many priests were converted to the Christian faith (Acts 6:7). Because we are all sinners, we all played a part in putting Jesus to death. The gospel — the Good News—is that God is gracious. He will forgive us and give us new life through His Son.

A Proper Response When you are wronged:

Proverbs 20:22 do not say, "I will recompense evil"; wait for the Lord, and He will save you.

Proverbs 24:29 Do not say, "I will do to him just as he has done to me; I will render to the man according to his work."

Leviticus 19:18 'You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.

Deuteronomy 32:35 Vengeance is Mine, and recompense; their foot shall slip in due time; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things to come hasten upon them.

36. For the Lord will judge His people and have compassion on His servants, when He sees that their power is gone, and there is no one remaining, bond or free.

Luke 6:27 “But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,

28. “Bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.

29. “To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either.

30. “Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back.

31. “And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.

The Jews despised the Romans because they oppressed God’s people, but Jesus told the people to love these enemies. Such words turned many away from Christ. But Jesus wasn’t talking about having affection for enemies; he was talking about an act of the will. You can’t “fall into” this kind of love—it takes conscious effort. Loving our enemies means acting in their best interests. We can pray for them, and we can think of ways to help them. Jesus loved the whole world, even though the world was in rebellion against God. Jesus asks us to follow his example by loving our enemies. Grant your enemies the same respect and rights as you desire for yourself.

Luke 6:35 “But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Highest. He is kind to the unthankful and evil.

36. “Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

A forgiving spirit demonstrates that a person has received God’s forgiveness. Jesus uses the picture of measuring grain in a basket to ensure the full amount. If you are critical rather than compassionate, you will also receive criticism. If you treat others generously, graciously, and compassionately, however, these qualities will come back to you in full measure. You are to love others, not judge them.

Romans 12:9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.

10. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving

preference to one another;

11. not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;
12. Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;
13. Distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.
14. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.
15. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.
16. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.
17. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.
18. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.
19. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.
20. "Therefore if your enemy hungers, feed him; if he thirsts, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."
21. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

God calls you to real and sincere love that goes far beyond pretense and politeness. Sincere love requires concentration and effort. It means helping others become better people. It demands your time, money, and personal involvement. No individual has the capacity to express love to a whole community, but the body of Christ in your town does. Look for people who need your love, and look for ways you and your fellow believers can love your community for Christ.

Forgiveness involves both attitudes and actions. If you find it difficult to *feel* forgiving toward someone who has hurt you, try responding with kind actions. If appropriate, tell this person that you would like to heal your relationship. Lend a helping hand. Send him or her a gift. Smile at him or her. Many times you will discover that right actions lead to right feelings.

1 Peter 3:8 Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, and be courteous;

9. Not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.

Peter lists five key elements that should characterize any group of believers:

- (1) Harmony—pursuing the same goals;
- (2) Sympathy—being responsive to others’ needs;
- (3) Love—seeing and treating each other as brothers and sisters;
- (4) Compassion—being affectionately sensitive and caring; and
- (5) Humility—being willing to encourage one another and rejoice in each other’s successes.

These five qualities go a long way toward helping believers serve God effectively. Qualities of compassion and humility the hard way. In his early days with Christ, these attitudes did not come naturally to his impulsive, strong-willed personality (see Mark 8:31-33; John 13:6-9 for examples of Peter’s blustering). But the Holy Spirit changed Peter, molding his strong personality to God’s use, and teaching him tenderness and humility.

Jacob Receives the Greater Blessing

When Rebekah learned that Isaac was preparing to bless Esau, she quickly devised a plan to trick him into blessing Jacob instead. Although God had already told her that Jacob would become the family leader. Rebekah took matters into her own hands. She resorted to doing something wrong to try to bring about what God had already said would happen. For Rebekah, the end justified the means. No matter how good you think your goals are, you should not attempt to achieve them by doing what is wrong. Would God approve of the methods you are using to accomplish your goals?

Jacob hesitated when he heard Rebekah’s deceitful plan. Although he questioned it for the wrong reason (fear of getting caught), he protested and thus gave her one last chance to reconsider. But Rebekah had become so wrapped up in her plan that she no longer saw clearly what she was doing. Sin had trapped her and was degrading her character. Correcting yourself in the middle of doing wrong may bring hurt and disappointment, but it also will bring freedom from sin’s control.

Before the father died, he performed a ceremony of blessing, in which he officially handed over the birthright to the rightful heir. Although the firstborn son

was entitled to the birthright, it was not actually his until the blessing was pronounced. Before the blessing was given, the father could take the birthright away from the oldest son and give it to a more deserving son. But after the blessing was given, the birthright could no longer be taken away. This is why fathers usually waited until late in life to pronounce the blessing. Although Jacob had been given the birthright by his older brother years before, he still needed his father's blessing to make it binding.

Jacob Leaves Home and Seeks a Wife in the Covenant.

Genesis 27:41-46

Esau hated Jacob because he had stolen his blessing, and he said to himself, "My father will soon be dead and gone. Then I will kill Jacob."

But someone got wind of what Esau was planning and reported it to Rebekah. She sent for Jacob and told him, "Esau is threatening to kill you. This is what you should do. Flee to your uncle Laban in Haran. Stay there with him until your brother's fury is spent. When he forgets what you have done, I will send for you. Why should I lose both of you in one day?"

Chapter 2

Esau Forgives Jacob

Jacob Returns and Prepares to meet Esau Genesis 31:3 32:3-20

Then the Lord said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your father and grandfather and to your relatives there, and I will be with you."

Jacob and Esau are Reunited

Genesis 33:1-16

Then, in the distance, Jacob saw Esau coming with his four hundred men. Jacob now arranged his family into a column, with his two concubines and their children at the front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last. Then Jacob went on ahead. As he approached his brother, he bowed low seven times before him. Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him affectionately and kissed him. Both of them were in tears.

Then Esau looked at the women and children and asked, "Who are these people with you?"

"These are the children God has graciously given to me," Jacob replied.

Then the concubines came forward with their children and bowed low before him. Next Leah came with her children, and they bowed down. Finally, Rachel and Joseph came and made their bows.

"And what were all the flocks and herds I met as I came?" Esau asked.

Jacob replied, "They are gifts, my lord, to ensure your goodwill." "Brother, I have plenty," Esau answered. "Keep what you have."

"No, please accept them," Jacob said, "for what a relief it is to see your friendly smile. It is like seeing the smile of God! Please take my gifts, for God has been very generous to me. I have more than enough." Jacob continued to insist, so Esau finally accepted them.

It is refreshing to see Esau's change of heart when the two brothers meet again. The bitterness over losing his birthright and blessing (Genesis 25:29-34) seems gone. Instead Esau was content with what he had. Jacob even exclaimed how great it was to see his brother obviously pleased with him (Genesis 33:10).

Life can bring you some bad situations. You can feel cheated, as Esau did, but you don't have to remain bitter. You can remove bitterness from your life by honestly expressing your feelings to God, forgiving those who have wronged you, and being content with what you have.

Bowing to the ground seven times was the sign of respect given to a king. Jacob was taking every precaution as he met Esau, hoping to dispel any thoughts of revenge.

Esau greeted his brother, Jacob, with a great hug. Imagine how difficult this must have been for a man who once had actually plotted his brother's death (Genesis 27:41). But time away from each other allowed the bitter wounds to heal. With the passing of time, each brother was able to see that their relationship was more important than their real estate.

Why did Jacob send gifts ahead for Esau?

In Bible times, gifts were given for several reasons.

- (1) This may have been a bribe. Gifts are still given to win someone over or buy his or her support. Esau may first have refused Jacob's gifts (Genesis 33:9) because he didn't want or need a bribe. He had already forgiven Jacob, and he had ample wealth of his own.
- (2) This may have been an expression of affection.
- (3) It may have been the customary way of greeting someone before an important meeting.

Such gifts were often related to a person's occupation. This explains why Jacob sent Esau—who was a herdsman—sheep, goats, and cattle.

Jacob is blessed

Genesis 35:9-12

God reminded Jacob of his new name, Israel, which means "He struggles with God." Although Jacob's life was littered with difficulties and trials, his new name was a tribute to his desire to stay close to God despite life's disappointments.

Many people believe that Christianity should offer a problem-free life. Consequently, as life gets tough, they draw back disappointed. Instead, they should determine to prevail with God through life's storm. Problems and difficulties are painful but inevitable; you might as well see them as opportunities for growth. You can't prevail with God unless you have troubles to prevail over.

Chapter 3

Joseph Forgives His Brothers

Joseph was the eleventh son of Jacob. He was born to Jacob's favorite wife, Rachel, in Paddan-Aram after she had been barren for seven years. The story of Joseph is found in Genesis chapters 37-50.

Jacob loved Joseph more than he loved his other sons. Jacob gave Joseph a "coat of many colors." The other brothers were jealous of Joseph and hated him. Joseph only further provoked this hatred when he told his brothers about two of his dreams. In the first, sheaves of wheat belonging to his brothers bowed to his own sheaf. In the second, the sun, moon, and 11 stars bowed to him.

Jacob sent Joseph to Shechem to check on his brothers. Joseph went to Shechem and, when his brothers were not there, followed them to Dothan. When the brothers saw him, they plotted to kill him and throw him into a pit. The oldest brother, Reuben, suggested that they merely throw Joseph into the pit, so Reuben could secretly save Joseph later.

When Joseph approached, the brothers took his coat and threw him into the pit. When they sat down to eat and saw a caravan of Ishmaelite traders from Gilead in the distance. Judah came up with the idea to sell Joseph into slavery. Joseph was sold for 20 pieces of silver. The brothers then dipped his coat into the blood of a slaughtered goat and brought it back to Jacob. Jacob recognized the coat and concluded that a beast had killed his son. He mourned for many days and was inconsolable.

Meanwhile, the traders took Joseph down to Egypt where Potiphar, who was captain of the guard, bought him. Joseph was successful there and Potiphar made Joseph his personal attendant, putting him in charge of the entire household.

Joseph was well built and handsome and after some time Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him. She approached Joseph day after day but he refused her each time, citing loyalty to Potiphar and to God. One day, Joseph came into the house to work. Potiphar's wife grabbed his coat and he ran away. She then pretended that Joseph had tried to seduce her and slandered him first to her servants and then to her husband. Potiphar was furious and sent Joseph to a jail for the king's prisoners.

In prison, the chief jailor liked Joseph and put him in charge of all the other prisoners, including Pharaoh's butler and baker. One night both the butler and the baker had strange dreams. Joseph interpreted the dreams, saying that in three days time the butler would be recalled to his former position while the baker would be killed. Sure enough, three days later, Pharaoh restored the butler to his job and killed the baker. Joseph asked the butler to mention his name to Pharaoh in the hope that he would be freed, but the butler forgot about Joseph.

Two years later, Pharaoh himself had two dreams that his magicians could not interpret. The butler then remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh about him. Pharaoh sent for the 30-year-old Joseph. He appeared before Pharaoh and told him in the name of God that the dreams forecasted seven years of plentiful crops followed by seven years of famine. He advised Pharaoh to make a wise man commissioner over the land with overseers to gather and store food from the seven years of abundance to save for the years of scarcity. Joseph's prediction and advice pleased Pharaoh and he made Joseph his second-in-command. He gave Joseph his ring and dressed him in robes of linen with a gold chain around his neck. Pharaoh gave him the Egyptian name Zaphenath-paneah and found him a wife named Asenath, daughter of Potiphera the priest of on.

Joseph traveled throughout Egypt, gathering and storing enormous amounts of grain from each city. During these years, Asenath and Joseph had two sons. The first, Joseph named Manasseh, meaning, "God has made me forget (*nashani*) completely my hardship and my parental home" (Genesis 41:51). He named the second son Ephraim, meaning, "God has made me fertile (*hiprani*) in the land of my affliction" (Genesis 41:52). After seven years, a famine spread throughout the world, and Egypt was the only country that had food. Joseph was in charge of rationing grain to the Egyptians and to all who came to Egypt.

The famine affected Canaan and Jacob sent his 10 oldest sons to Egypt to get food, keeping only Benjamin, Rachel's second son and Jacob's youngest child, at home out of concern for his safety. Joseph's brothers came and bowed to Joseph, who recognized them immediately but pretended they were strangers. He asked them where they were from and accused them of being spies. They denied his claim but he continued to speak harshly to them and interrogate them. They told

him they had a younger brother at home. Joseph then locked them in the guardhouse for three days before commanding the brothers to go home and bring their youngest brother back with them to prove that they were telling the truth. The brothers spoke among themselves lamenting that they were being punished for what they had done to Joseph, who overheard them, turned away and wept, but then continued his act. He gave them grain and provisions for the journey, secretly returned their money and kept Simeon in jail pending their return.

The brothers returned to Canaan and told Jacob all that had happened in Egypt. They asked Jacob to send Benjamin down with them but he refused, (Genesis 43:9). However, Jacob finally sent the brothers back to Egypt with Benjamin, along with a gift for Joseph and double the necessary money to repay the money that was returned to them.

When the brothers arrived, Joseph brought them to the entrance of his house and instructed his servant to prepare a meal. The brothers were scared and told Joseph they did not know how the money got back in their bags. Joseph replied that their God must have put it there because he received their payment. The brothers then went inside and waited for Joseph to come eat with them. When he returned, they gave him the gifts and bowed to him. He asked about their father, and they responded that he was well, and bowed a second time. He asked if Benjamin was their brother, and left the room, overcome with emotion after seeing his brother again. He then returned and ate and drank with his brothers, giving Benjamin more food than the others. He then instructed his servant to fill the brothers' bags with food, return each one's money a second time, and put his own silver goblet in Benjamin's bag.

As soon as the brothers left the city, Joseph's servant overtook them and accused them of stealing Joseph's goblet. He said that whoever had the goblet in his possession would be kept as a slave, while the others would go free. He searched their possessions and found the goblet in Benjamin's bag. All the brothers returned to the city and threw themselves on the ground before Joseph. Judah expressed their willingness to become Joseph's slaves. Joseph answered that only the one in whose possession the goblet was found would become a slave. Judah then pleaded with Joseph, telling him of Jacob's reluctance to send Benjamin and of his own responsibility for Benjamin. He told of the sorrow that would overtake

Jacob if Benjamin did not return. At this point, Joseph could no longer control himself. He sent away all of his attendants began to cry loudly and revealed his true identity to his brothers.

Joseph's first query was about his father, but the brothers were too shocked to answer. He reassured them that it was God's providence that sent him to Egypt to ensure their survival during the famine, and he was not angry with them. He sent them back with instructions to tell Jacob what had become of Joseph and to bring Jacob and his household to the nearby town of Goshen where Joseph could care for them during the next five years of famine. He then embraced Benjamin, kissed all of his brothers and wept.

Pharaoh heard that Joseph's brothers had come and told them to bring their households to Egypt where he would give them the best of the land. Joseph gave each of them a wagon, provisions for the trip and a change of clothing. He gave Benjamin 300 pieces of silver and several changes of clothing. He also sent a large present back for his father.

At first Jacob did not believe that Joseph was alive. After he saw the wagons that Joseph sent, however, he realized it was true. Then Jacob, at age 130, set out for Goshen with the 70 members of his household. He sent Judah ahead of him so Joseph knew that his father was coming. Joseph went to meet him and they embraced and cried. Joseph told Pharaoh that his brothers and father had arrived. The brothers informed Pharaoh that they were shepherds and Pharaoh put them in charge of his livestock. They lived in the best part of Egypt, in Rameses, and Joseph provided them with bread.

After Jacob had lived in Egypt for 17 years, he called Joseph to him and made him swear that when Jacob died, Joseph would not bury him in Egypt, but would take him to the burial place of his fathers. Joseph swore to this. Soon after, Joseph was told that his father was sick. He brought his two sons to Jacob. Jacob assured Joseph that he would consider Ephraim and Manasseh to be his sons just like Reuben and Simeon were when it came to the inheritance that God had promised Jacob's offspring. Jacob then blessed Ephraim and Manasseh. Although Manasseh was the first-born, Jacob put his right hand, the stronger hand, on

Ephraim's head. When Joseph corrected him, Jacob said he did it on purpose and predicted that Ephraim would surpass Manasseh in greatness. Jacob told Joseph that he was about to die, but reassured him that God would be with him. He also assigned him an extra portion of his inheritance, a privilege usually given to the first-born.

Jacob blessed all of his sons, giving the longest blessing to Joseph. He instructed them to bury him in the cave of Machpelah, and then he died. Joseph flung himself at his father, cried and kissed him. Joseph then ordered the physicians to embalm Jacob.

Once Jacob was dead, the brothers were scared that Joseph would take revenge on them for selling him. They sent a message to Joseph saying that before his death Jacob had instructed them to tell Joseph to forgive them. They then offered to be his slaves. Joseph reassured them, saying that God intended for Joseph to go down to Egypt to ensure the survival of many people, and Joseph would take care of them and their children. So Joseph, his brothers and his father's household remained in Egypt.

Joseph lived 110 years. He saw great-grandchildren from both his sons. Before he died, he told his brothers that God would one day bring them up from Egypt into the land that God promised their fathers. He made them swear to carry his bones out of Egypt into that land. Joseph died and was embalmed and put in a coffin in Egypt.

When the Jews eventually left Egypt, the Children of Israel carried out Joseph's bones. Joseph was buried in Shechem, on a piece of land that Jacob had previously bought. Joseph's two sons both became tribes in Israel and the northern Israelite kingdom is many times referred to as the "House of Joseph."

Chapter 4

Job Forgives His Comforters

In ancient times, east of Palestine, lived a righteous man by the name of Job. He was a just and good man, who always strove to please God throughout his life. The Lord rewarded him for his piety with great wealth. He had many hundreds of cattle. His close family of seven sons and three daughters comforted him.

But the devil was jealous of Job. He began to vilify him before God, “Does Job fear God for nothing? But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse thee to thy face.” Then God in order to reveal to all hell, how faithful Job was to Him and in order to teach people patience in their suffering, permitted the devil to take away all of Job's possessions. In one day robbers came and drove away all his cattle, slew his servants, and a terrible tornado from the desert destroyed the house in which Job's children had gathered together, killing them all. Job not only did not complain against God, but he said, God gave to him and God hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.”

The devil, put to shame, was not satisfied with this. Again he began to slander Job. Job 2:4 So Satan answered the Lord and said, “Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life.” 5. But stretch out your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse you to your face!” God permitted the devil to deprive Job even of his health. Job was stricken with a terrible disease. Even his wife began to persuade him to complain against God. His friends instead of a consolation, only further grieved the innocent sufferer with their unjust suspicions. But Job remained firm. He did not lose hope in the mercy of God and only begged the Lord to testify that he was suffering in innocence.

In his discourse with his friends, Job prophesied about the Redeemer, and the future resurrection:

Job 19:25 “For I know *that* my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth;

26. And after my skin is destroyed, this *I know*, that in my flesh I shall see God, **27.** Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. *How* my heart yearns within me!”

After this, God, having shown to all the example of devotion and long suffering in His servant Job, appeared Himself and commanded Job's friends, who had regarded him as a great sinner, to ask for prayers from him for themselves.

Job 42:7 And so it was, after the Lord had spoken these words to Job, that the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has.

8. "Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you. For I will accept him, lest I deal with you according to your folly; because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has."

9. So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the Lord commanded them; for the Lord had accepted Job.

God rewarded His faithful servant. Job regained his health. He had seven more sons and three daughters. He was given back twice as much capital as he had before, and lived 140 years in honor, quietly, piously and happily.

The story of Job teaches us that God sends misfortune not just for sins, but sometimes God sends misfortune even to the righteous for an even greater confirmation of His goodness, for the shaming of the devil, and for the glorification of the righteousness of God. The history of the life of Job also reveals to us that earthly welfare does not always accompany a virtuous life for men, and teaches us also to be sympathetic to those in misfortune. Job, by his innocent suffering and patience, foreshadowed the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Scriptures About Suffering

Jeremiah 20:11 But the Lord is with me as a mighty, awesome one, (**POWERFUL GIANT**). **Therefore my persecutors will stumble, and will not prevail.** They will be greatly ashamed, for they will not prosper. Their everlasting confusion will never be forgotten.

Matthew 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11. "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for my sake.

12. "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

John 15:18 "If the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you.

19. "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

20. "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will keep yours also.

Acts 14:21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch,

21. strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

Romans 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36. As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."

37. Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

38. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, **39.** nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 Corinthians 4:8 We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

9. persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;

10. always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

11. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of

Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

2 Corinthians 12:10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Timothy 3:12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

1 Peter 4:12 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;

13. but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

14. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.

1 Peter 4:16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

Chapter 5

Moses Forgives the Israelites

(Numbers 12)

Miriam, sister of Aaron and Moses, was a prophetess and a true leader among the women in her day. But, toward the end of her life, she felt jealousy against Moses and his special relationship with God. Moses had married a non-Israelite. Miriam was having difficulty accepting her role. So God smote her with leprosy, and directed Moses to send her outside the city for seven days. But Moses interceded with God on her behalf, and He forgave her.

Few people compare favorably with Moses. Moses had been put out to die in a pitch-covered basket, and set afloat in the Nile River. He was rescued by Pharaoh's daughter, and then raised as the son of the most powerful ruler on earth. Years later Moses was called to confront Pharaoh, as the result of a conversation with the Lord at the burning bush.

When Moses confronted Pharaoh, he did so as God's prophet. In response to his words, plagues came upon Egypt and were later removed. When Pharaoh finally released the Israelites, it was Moses who led them through the midst of the Red Sea, on dry ground!

Moses was a great mediator. When God revealed His glory at Mount Sinai, the people were terrified and asked Moses to be their mediator, between them and God:

Closely related to his role as mediator was Moses' function as an intercessor. The nation of Israel would have been wiped out had it not been for Moses:

Numbers 14:11 And the Lord said to Moses: "How long will these people reject me? And how long will they not believe me, with all the signs, which I have performed among them?"

12. "I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they."

13. And Moses said to the Lord: "Then the Egyptians will hear it, for by Your might You brought these people up from among them,

14. "and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, Lord, are among these people; that You, Lord, are seen face to face and that Your cloud stands above them; and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night.

15. "Now if You kill these people as one man, then the nations which have heard of Your fame will speak, saying,

16. 'Because the Lord was not able to bring this people to the land which He swore to give them, therefore He killed them in the wilderness.'

17. "And now, I pray, let the power of my Lord be great, just as you have spoken, saying,

18. 'The Lord is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation.'

19. "Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of your mercy, just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now."

20. Then the Lord said: "I have pardoned, according to YOUR word."

This incident where Moses mediated on behalf of the nation Israel took place at Kadesh, and God makes it clear that this was the last of many similar interventions on Moses' part:

Numbers 14:22 "Because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice,

23. "they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected me see it."

Moses was especially esteemed for his role in the reception of the Law of Moses. In addition to this, he was a great military leader. Under Moses' leadership, the nation defeated the armies of those who opposed them, beginning with Pharaoh's army. Moses was also a judge and arbitrator for the nation Israel:

Numbers 12:6. Then He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among

you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream.

7. Not so with my servant Moses; He *is* faithful in all my house.

8. I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"

Numbers 12:3. (Now the man Moses *was* very humble, more than all men who *were* on the face of the earth.)

Deuteronomy 34:10 But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face,

11. in all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants, and in all his land,

12. and by all that mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

Numbers 12:1-3

Aaron and Miriam, with an unbecoming passion, spoke against Moses, verse 1. If Moses received so much honor from God, yet received so many slights and affronts from men, how shall any of us think such trials either strange or hard, and be either provoked or discouraged by them? But who would have thought that disturbance should come against Moses, from those that were themselves serious and good? Aaron was the high priest, both Aaron and Miriam were joint-commissioners with Moses for the deliverance of Israel.

Micah 6:4 For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, I redeemed you from the house of bondage; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

The attack came from those that were his nearest relations, his own brother and sister. "*A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city,*" Proverbs 18:19. Yet this helps to confirm the call of Moses, and shows that his advancement was purely by divine favor, and not by any compact or collusion with his kindred, who themselves begrudged his advancement, see John 7:5. It should seem that

Miriam began the quarrel, and Aaron, not having been employed or consulted in the choice of the seventy elders, was for the present somewhat disgusted, and so was easily drawn in to take his sister's part.

It would grieve one to see the hand of Aaron in so many trespasses, but it shows that *the law made men priests who had infirmity*. Satan prevailed first with Eve, and by her with Adam; see what need we have to take heed of being drawn into quarrels by our relations, for we know not how great a matter a little fire may kindle.

Aaron ought to have remembered how Moses stood as his friend when God was angry with him for making the golden calf (Deuteronomy 9:20), and not to have rendered him evil for good.

"Has the Lord spoken only by Moses? Must *he* alone have the choice of the persons on whom the spirit of prophecy shall come? Has he not spoken also *by us*? Might not we have had a hand in that affair, and preferred our friends, as well as Moses his?" They could not deny that God had spoken by Moses, but it was plain he had sometimes spoken also by them; and that which they intended was to make themselves equal with him, though God had in so many ways distinguished him. Striving to be greatest is a sin which easily besets the disciples themselves, and it is exceedingly sinful.

Numbers 12:4-9 Moses did not resent the injury done him, nor complain of it to God, nor make any appeal to him; but God resented it. He hears all we say in our passion, and is a swift witness of our hasty speeches, which is a reason why we should resolutely bridle our tongues, that we speak not ill of others, and why we should patiently stop our ears, and not take notice of it, if others speak ill of us.

To recompense Moses for his meekness and patience in bearing the affronts which Miriam and Aaron gave him, God not only cleared him, but praised him. The Lord came down in a pillar of cloud, stood in the door of the Tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. He told them that He spoke to other prophets in visions or dreams, **BUT SPOKE FACE TO FACE** with Moses. This gave Moses far greater honor than the other prophets. God showed Aaron and Miriam that they needed to be afraid of speaking against Moses.

This is that part of Moses's character which the apostle quotes when he would show that Christ was greater than Moses, making it out that he was so in this chief instance of his greatness; for Moses was faithful only *as a servant*, but Christ

as a son, Hebrews 3:2, 5, 6. God entrusted Moses to deliver His thoughts in all things to Israel; Israel entrusted Moses to go between them and God; and he was faithful to both. He said and did everything in the management of that great affair as became an honest good man, that aimed at nothing else but the honor of God and the welfare of Israel. (2.) Moses was therefore honored with clearer discoveries of God's mind, and a more intimate communion with God, than any other prophet whatsoever.

He shall, [1.] Hear more from God than any other prophet, more clearly and distinctly:

Exodus 33:11 So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.

God spoke with Moses as a person who would have a discourse freely and familiarly, and without any confusion or consternation, such as sometimes other prophets were under; as Ezekiel, and John himself, when God spoke to them. By other prophets God sent to his people reproofs, and predictions of good or evil, which were properly enough delivered in dark speeches, figures, types, and parables; but by Moses he gave laws to his people, and the institution of holy ordinances, which could by no means be delivered by dark speeches, but must be expressed in the plainest and most intelligible manner.

[2.] He shall see more of God than any other prophet: The similitude of the Lord shall behold, as he hath seen it in Horeb, when God proclaimed His name before him. Yet he saw only the similitude of the Lord, angels and glorified saints always behold the face of our Father. Moses had the spirit of prophecy in a way peculiar to himself, and which set him far above all other prophets; yet he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he, much more does our Lord Jesus infinitely excel him, Hebrews 3:1, etc.

Now let Miriam and Aaron consider who it was that they insulted: Were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? Against my servant, against Moses? so it runs in the original. "How dare you abuse any servant of Mine, especially such a servant as Moses, who is a friend, a confidant, and steward of the house?"

How dare they speak to the grief and reproach of one whom God had so much to say in commendation of? Might they not expect that God would resent it, and take it as an affront to himself?

We have reason to be afraid of saying or doing anything against the servants of God; it is at our peril if we do, for God will plead their cause, and reckon that what touches them touches the apple of His eye.

In Numbers 12:10-16 we see:

1. God's judgment upon Miriam (v. 10): The cloud departed from off that part of the tabernacle, in token of God's displeasure, and presently Miriam became leprous; when God goes, evil comes; expect no good when God departs. The leprosy was a disease often inflicted by the immediate hand of God as the punishment of some particular sin, as on Gehazi for lying, on Uzziah for invading the priest's office, and here on Miriam for scolding and making mischief among relations.

This judgment upon Miriam is improvable by us as a warning to take heed of putting any affront upon our Lord Jesus. If she was thus chastised for speaking against Moses, what will become of those that sin against Christ?

2. Aaron's submission hereupon (v. 11, 12); he humbles himself to Moses, confesses his fault, and begs for pardon.

Let her not be as one dead, that is, "Let her not continue so separated from conversation, defiling all she touches, and even to putrefy above ground as one dead." He eloquently describes the misery of her case, to move his pity.

The intercession made for Miriam (v. 13): He cried unto the Lord with a loud voice, because the cloud, the symbol of his presence, was removed and stood at some distance, and to express his fervency in this request, Heal her now, O Lord, I beseech thee.

By this Moses made it to appear that he did heartily forgive Miriam the injury she had done him, that he had not accused her to God, nor called for justice against her; so far from this, that when God, in tenderness to His honor had chastised her insolence, he was the first that moved for reversing the judgment.

By this example we are taught to pray for those that spitefully use us; and not to take pleasure in the most righteous punishment inflicted either by God or man on those that have been injurious to us.

Chapter 6

David Forgives Shimei

God sometimes uses the worst that men can say about us to shape our character and strengthen us. A story in the Old Testament illustrates the reality of this truth: it is the story of Shimei, the mean-spirited man who threw rocks at David (2 Samuel 16:5-14).

Shimei and his kin

The book of 2 Samuel is about David — his fortunes and misfortunes. David was a brilliant and far-sighted leader, and, more importantly, he was a man with a heart for God. He had almost constant trouble with his family. His wives and children repeatedly caused him grief. The trouble began when Absalom's sister, Tamar, was raped and humiliated by Amnon, another of David's sons. David did nothing. Absalom waited for two years before taking matters into his own hands by murdering his brother and fleeing into exile in Syria (Samuel 13:20-29). He was later forgiven by David and allowed to return, but soon after he began plotting to seize the throne.

Absalom devoted four years preparing for a takeover, currying favor with the people and setting up his agents throughout the kingdom (15:1-12). Then, his plans laid, he went to Hebron, gathered the people, engineered his own anointing as king, and marched on Jerusalem, 'Arise and let us flee, for otherwise none of us shall escape from Absalom. Go in haste, lest he overtake us quickly and bring down calamity on us and strike the city with the edge of the sword'" (2 Samuel 15:14

David was not a coward. His flight was not motivated by fear, but by the tactics of warfare. He knew he would be pinned down in the city, so to spare Jerusalem the horrors of a siege and to gain time for his friends to gather, he withdrew.

"The king went out and all the people with him, and they stopped at the last house. Now all his servants passed on beside him, all the Cherethites, all the

Pelethites, and all the Gittites, [his personal bodyguard] six hundred men who had come with him from Gath passed on before the king" (15:17-18).

David felt one blow after another, calamities fell on him. He had to send Zadok, his priest and pastor, back to Jerusalem. He discovered that his trusted friend and wise counselor, Ahithophel, was a traitor; so he sent his loyal, aged friend, Hushai, back to Jerusalem; and he was told by Ziba that Saul's grandson, Mephibosheth, to whom David had shown such kindness, was among the conspirators.

2 Samuel 16:5 Now when King David came to Bahurim, there was a man from the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei the son of Gera, coming from there. He came out, cursing continuously as he came.

Bahurim was a small village a few miles from Jerusalem on the road to Jericho. As David approached the village, Shimei, one of Saul's descendants and a man who shared Saul's hostility to the House of David, came out cursing him and pelting him with rocks. "He threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David; and all the people and all the mighty men were at his right hand and at his left" (16:6 NASB). David's body guards anxiously gathered around to shield him.

2 Samuel 16:7 Shimei said thus when he cursed: "Come out! Come out! You bloodthirsty man, you rogue!

8. "The Lord has brought upon you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and the Lord has delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom your son. So now you are caught in your own evil, because you are a bloodthirsty man!"

Shimei's charge was unfounded. Saul's life had been in David's hands more than once, but he had refused to touch "the Lord's anointed," as David put it, even though Saul ruthlessly pursued him and tried to put him to death. David executed the man who later killed Saul and put to death those who assassinated Saul's son, Ishbosheth. He wept for Saul and his son Jonathan when they fell at Gilboa, and composed a beautiful and poignant poem about these two brave men (2 Samuel 1:19-27), and then he took Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, into his own home. He

was totally innocent of Shimei's charge.

"Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, 'Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over, and cut off his head' (16:9 NASB). Abishai was David's nephew, one of his hot tempered young retainers, fiercely loyal to the king. He was protective of his uncle, and on at least one occasion had saved his life (2 Samuel 21:16-17). His violence was legendary (2 Samuel 23:18-19). But David restrained him:

2 Samuel 16:10 And the king said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? So let him curse, because the Lord has said to him, 'Curse David.' Who then shall say, 'Why have you done so?'"

11. And David said to Abishai and all his servants, "See how my son who came from my own body seeks my life. How much more now may this Benjamite? Let him alone, and let him curse; for so the Lord has ordered him.

12. "It may be that the Lord will look on my affliction, and that the Lord will repay me with good for his cursing this day."

13. And as David and his men went along the road, Shimei went along the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went, threw stones at him and kicked up dust.

14. Now the king and all the people who were with him became weary; so they refreshed themselves there.

Shimei followed David and his entourage to Bahurim where David and his men stopped to rest. It's probable that he continued to molest the camp, raving and cursing into the night, but David was able to refresh himself there.

We're told later that when David returned to Jerusalem after putting down Absalom's revolt, Shimei met the returning king at the fords of the Jordan and begged for mercy (2 Samuel 19:15-23). David forgave him but later warned Solomon of his treachery. He was not a man to be trusted. Finally, Solomon put Shimei to death, but David never avenged himself on this spiteful little man.

Shimei Then and Now:

Criticism rarely comes when we're up and on top of things. It's usually when

we're down and out that some critic comes along. People pile judgments on our sorrow and suffering, and once they get going, they can't seem to stop.

Also, it seems to me, the worst critiques come when we least deserve them. David wasn't always right, but on this occasion he was innocent of any wrongdoing. He didn't deserve Shimei's curses. But we shouldn't be surprised. "Evil is always more readily spoken of and believed of another than good," said Thomas à Kempis.

Criticism usually comes from people who are least qualified to give it. Much of it is generated by people who don't understand, or who are so morally unqualified they have no right to throw stones. Like Shimei, they have no heart for God or for God's plan to bring salvation to the world. Yet it is often from these people we receive the harshest blows.

And finally, criticism often comes in a form that is least helpful. It's hard enough to take a critique when it comes in love, but no one likes to hear it when it's hard and harsh — when our character and motives are assailed. It would be good if all our critics were gentle and redemptive, but that's often not the case. Sometimes they just like to throw rocks.

A portion of this lesson was taken from a sermon by Rudolph Stier.

Chapter 7

David Forgives Saul

1 Samuel 24-26) 2 Samuel 1)

God told David that he would one day be king. However, the king at that time (Saul) was jealous and envious of David. He tried to have him killed so that his son, Jonathan, could be king.

Jonathan and David were best friends. Jonathan wanted David to be king as God said. He helped David escape his father's evil traps. Consequently, David was continually running from Saul. He would hide in caves or fields to escape being killed by Saul's men. One time, Saul heard that David was in the wilderness. He and 3,000 men marched into the land to destroy David. David secretly hid in a cave to hide from Saul.

Saul went into the same cave. David quietly crept up to Saul and cut off a little piece of his royal robe. He was so secretive that Saul did not know that he was there! When Saul exited the cave, David felt guilty and felt bad for cutting off a piece from the bottom of the clothing, because the robe symbolized that he was the king appointed from God.

David walked to the entrance of the cave and called out to Saul. He bowed down to Saul and asked Saul why he wanted to kill him, then he showed Saul the piece of fabric.

Saul cried out to David and realized that David had spared his life. He confessed that David had treated him well when he had treated David badly.

David promised to be kind to Saul's family and Saul went back to his palace. David gave Saul a second chance.

This was not the end. Sometime later, Saul heard that David was in the wilderness and he again tried to kill him. He and his troops traveled to the wilderness to find David. David sent out scouts to find out where Saul and his men

were camped. That night, David crept into Saul's camp and even into Saul's tent! They found Saul asleep with a spear near his head. David's men wanted to kill Saul right then. David again spared Saul's life. Instead of killing Saul, they took the spear and his water jug that were by his head.

David crossed over to the other side of the hill and called out to the army leader. It was the middle of the night and he awakened everyone. Saul recognized David's voice and called out to him. David showed Saul his spear and asked why Saul was trying to hurt him again. He told him that he had an opportunity to kill him again, but chose to spare his life.

Saul realized that he again had sinned. He asked David for forgiveness and thanked him for being kind. He knew that David would do great things for God. They both parted ways again and David went to live in another country. David did not understand why Saul was trying to kill him. He had done only good things for Saul. Each time Saul tried to hurt him, David would forgive him. David spared Saul's life twice!

David loved God and follow Him. He wanted to honor God and respect Him. He was willing to forgive. David trusted God to protect him and God not only protected David, but later honored him because of the good ways David treated Saul.

God forgives us in the same way, when we have sinned or done wrong. God should punish US for our wrongs but He came up with a different solution. God's Son, Jesus, took our punishment for us when He died on the cross. He did this because He loves us. If we believe in Him and know that Jesus came back to life three days later, Jesus will clean out all our sin. He promises that we can have eternal life with Christ. Ask God to help us forgive others like David forgave Saul and how God forgives us.

Ephesians 4:32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you.

Ephesians 5:1 Therefore be followers of God as dear children.

2. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

Chapter 8

Solomon Forgives Adonijah

1 Kings 1-11, 2 Chronicles 1-9

1 Kings 1:1 Now King David was old, advanced in years; and they put covers on him, but he could not get warm.

2. Therefore his servants said to him, “Let a young woman, a virgin, be sought for our lord the king, and let her stand before the king, and let her care for him; and let her lie in your bosom, that our lord the king may be warm.”

3. So they sought for a lovely young woman throughout all the territory of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the king.

4. The young woman *was* very lovely; and she cared for the king, and served him; but the king did not know her.

5. Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, “I will be king”; and he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him.

After his older brothers Ammon and Absalom were killed and Chileab apparently died young or was unfit to be king. Adonijah assumed the throne would be his. However, the Lord had already chosen Solomon, Adonijah’s younger brother, to be David's successor, as Adonijah knew.

1 Kings 2:15 Then he said, "You know that the kingdom was mine, and all Israel had set their expectations on me, that I should reign. However, the kingdom has been turned over, and has become my brother's; for it was his from the Lord.

Nevertheless, Adonijah chose to defy the Lord by attempting to seize the throne for himself. Adonijah’s attempt to hold the throne of Israel, which like the office of high priest was created as a living prophecy of Christ, and was not done after David was dead, when the throne would require a successor, but while David was still alive. This made Adonijah take over a coup against a reigning king. This was an act of treason that had the support of some of David's government, military and religious officials.

1 Kings 1:5 Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, “I will be king”; and he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him.

6. (And his father had not rebuked him at any time by saying, “Why have you done so?” He *was* also very good-looking. *His mother* had borne him after Absalom.)

7. Then he conferred with Joab the son of Zeruah and with Abiathar the priest, and they followed and helped Adonijah.

8. But Zadok the priest, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, Nathan the prophet, Shimei, Rei, and the mighty men who *belonged* to David were not with Adonijah.

When Solomon's mother Bathsheba and Nathan the prophet saw what Adonijah was about to do they reported the situation to David, who was unaware of what was happening because he had been frail and bedridden for some time.

1 Kings 1:17 Then she said to him, “My lord, you swore by the Lord your God to your maidservant, *saying*, ‘Assuredly Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne.’

18. So now, look! Adonijah has become king; and now, my lord the king, you do not know about *it*.

19. He has sacrificed oxen and fattened cattle and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the sons of the king, Abiathar the priest, and Joab the commander of the army; but Solomon your servant he has not invited.

20. And as for you, my lord, O king, the eyes of all Israel *are* on you, that you should tell them who will sit on the throne of my lord the king after him.

21. Otherwise it will happen, when my lord the king rests with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon will be counted as offenders.”

22. And just then, while she was still talking with the king, Nathan the prophet also came in. **2**

3. So they told the king, saying, “Here is Nathan the prophet.” And when he came in before the king, he bowed down before the king with his face to the ground.

24. And Nathan said, “My lord, O king, have you said, ‘Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne’?

25. For he has gone down today, and has sacrificed oxen and fattened cattle and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the king's sons, and the commanders of the army, and Abiathar the priest; and look! They are eating and drinking before him;

and they say, ‘*Long live King Adonijah!*’

26. But he has not invited me—me your servant —nor Zadok the priest, nor Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, nor your servant Solomon.

27. Has this thing been done by my lord the king, and you have not told your servant who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?”

Although David had become weak in body, his mind was still strong. When he heard what was going on, he immediately ordered that Solomon be publicly proclaimed King.

1 Kings 1:32 and King David said, “Call to me Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada.” So they came before the king.

33. The king also said to them, “Take with you the servants of your lord, and have Solomon my son ride on my own mule, and take him down to Gihon.

34. There let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him king over Israel; and blow the horn, and say, ‘*Long live King Solomon!*’

When the Adonijah followers heard that Solomon had been made king, they deserted him. Adonijah himself fled and sought asylum in the temple area. He caught hold of the horns of the altar. Solomon spared the life of his treacherous brother that time.

1 Kings 1:49 So all the guests who were with Adonijah were afraid, and arose, and each one went his way.

50. Now Adonijah was afraid of Solomon; so he arose, and went and took hold of the horns of the altar.

51. And it was told Solomon, saying, “Indeed Adonijah is afraid of King Solomon; for look, he has taken hold of the horns of the altar, saying, ‘Let King Solomon swear to me today that he will not put his servant to death with the sword.’”

King David died after reigning for 40 years. Then Solomon sat upon the throne of David his father, and his kingdom was greatly established. Solomon's mercy on conniving Adonijah turned out to be wasted. Adonijah was still a schemer for the throne, as documented by his attempt to marry Abishag the Shunammite. He even attempted to use Solomon's own mother Bathsheba in the

plot. When Solomon was informed of his brother's latest plotting, Solomon faced the hard reality that he had to act to defend the throne and his own life against a brother that chose to remain a deadly threat. Solomon ordered Adonijah executed. Following the first pardon, Adonijah could have accepted Solomon's forgiveness and remained in his place that had been chosen by God, but his continual scheming cost him his life.

Once we have received pardon from God, we must not continue to sin.

Proverbs 28:13 He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.

Proverbs 29:1 He who is often reproved, and hardens his neck, will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

Chapter 9

Jesus Forgives His Accusers

Forgiveness is never 'looking the other way', or acting as if no wrong is or has been committed. Forgiving is not excusing the inexcusable, tolerating the intolerable, nor sweeping things under the [proverbial] carpet. That is NOT God's way.

Isaiah 55:8 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways," says the Lord.

True love and forgiveness operate on the basis of integrity. God the Father sent God the Son to die on Calvary's cross to make genuine forgiveness possible.

John 3:16."For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

"The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations..." Luke 24:46,47.

The benefits of this divine forgiveness are available upon the condition that men and women acknowledge their wrongful behavior and status as lost sinners -- i.e., repent. With God, there is no such thing as unconditional forgiveness. "...your sins have been forgiven on account of his name." 1 John 2:12

"I [Jesus] have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Luke 5:32.

"I have listened attentively, but they do not say what is right. No one repents of his wickedness, saying, 'What have I done?'" Jeremiah 8:6.

This is the biblical pattern of forgiveness which Christians are called to follow. As the Lord requires accountability and genuine repentance to establish a relationship with Him, likewise these attributes form the basis for forgiveness amongst ourselves and the foundation for healthy human relationships.

"If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and IF he repents, forgive him." Luke 17:3

"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have

against one another. Forgive as **[in the same manner]** the Lord forgave you."

Colossians 3:13 "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as **[in the same manner]** in Christ God forgave you." Ephesians 4:32

There were seven times that Jesus spoke from the Cross. In Luke 23:34 Jesus said, "Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." The Roman rulers did not know He was the Son of God. The High Priest, the chief priests, elders of the people, and the scribes, did not realize that Jesus was the Son of God, because their eyes were blinded to the truth. The High Priest, and chief priest were supposed to know the prophecies in the Scriptures, but did not remember them because they were full of self-righteousness and pride. Had they known the truth they would not have crucified Christ.

The Roman soldiers parted His garments and cast lots which fulfilled the Scripture in Psalm 22:17, see Matthew 27:35. The Roman soldiers who had to carry out the orders of their rulers did not know what they did. They did not know the Scripture. The soldiers of the nation are not to blame for the wrong decisions taken by their kings or rulers.

The essence of the glorious gospel is forgiveness. Jesus forgave His enemies hanging from His cross. He could have forgiven them after his resurrection from the dead. He forgave them from the very cross made for Him. If we are the disciples of Christ Jesus, we have to follow his footsteps. We should forgive our enemies when we suffer persecution through their very hands.

Christian nations should have the mind of Christ in forgiving their enemies. The name of Christ should be glorified by the nations because it is Christ who has blessed and exalted these nations in the world. The founding fathers of these nations were God-fearing people. Now the present rulers of the nations have not yet heeded Him. They have trampled His Word.

When we are born again, we are given a spirit of forgiveness. When one walks in the flesh and not in the spirit, there is always a problem of forgiveness.

Chapter 10

The Prophet of Judah Forgives Jeroboam

1 Kings 13 - The Man of God from Judah

A. A prophecy from a man of God.

1. (1-2) The coming destruction of the altar in Bethel.

1 Kings 13:1 And behold, a man of God went from Judah to Bethel by the word of the Lord, and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense.

2. Then he cried out against the altar by the word of the Lord, and said, “O altar, altar! Thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and men’s bones shall be burned on you.’”

a. A man of God went from Judah to Bethel: Apparently, there were no qualified messengers within the northern kingdom of Israel. This is a sad commentary on the spiritual state of Jeroboam's kingdom. This anonymous man of God was used in an important way. He demonstrates that one does not need to be famous to be significantly used by God.

b. Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you: This is a remarkable prophecy that would be precisely fulfilled 340 years later.

1 Kings 23:15 documents the fulfillment of this prophecy in the days of Josiah, King of Judah: Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he broke down; and he burned the high place and crushed it to powder, and burned the wooden image.

This was more than a pronouncement of judgment against the altar; it also announced that the judgment would come through a ruler of Judah (**the house of**

David). This was a special rebuke and source of concern to Jeroboam, who was always aware of the threat from his neighbor to the south (as in 1 Kings 12:27).

We know that this didn't happen for some 350 years, but Jeroboam didn't know that in advance. He went to his grave worried about the fulfillment of this prophecy, which was a sort of immediate judgment on Jeroboam.

Signs to confirm the prophet's words

And he gave a sign the same day, saying, “This *is* the sign which the Lord has spoken: Surely the altar shall split apart, and the ashes on it shall be poured out.” So it came to pass when King Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, who cried out against the altar in Bethel, that he stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, “Arrest him!” Then his hand, which he stretched out toward him, withered, so that he could not pull it back to himself. The altar also was split apart, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign that the man of God had given by the word of the Lord.

- a. **He gave a sign the same day:** The prophecy of the man of God would not be fulfilled for hundreds of years, so an immediate sign was given to confirm the word to the present-day hearers.
- b. **Surely the altar shall split apart, and the ashes on it shall be poured out:** This would be a convincing sign, and a direct rebuke to the idolatrous worship at that altar.
- c. **Arrest him!** Jeroboam's reaction was immediate - he sought to silence the messenger rather than respond to the message. The prophecy from the man of God was like most every message of coming judgment - an implicit invitation to repentance. Jeroboam obviously did not accept this invitation. “If Jeroboam would not have Jehovah's *priests*, God sends His *prophet* into his land.” (Knapp)
- d. **His hand, which he stretched out toward him, withered, so that he could not pull it back to himself:** God confirmed His word of judgment in two ways. First, He judged the disobedient king at the precise point of his most glaring sin (the outstretched hand against the man of God). Second, He fulfilled the immediate word against the altar (the altar also was split apart).

“This God may have done this to chastise Jeroboam for offering violence to the Lord's prophet; partly, to secure the prophet against further violence; and partly, that in this example God might show how highly he resents the injuries done to his ministers in and for the faithful discharge of their office.” (Poole)

Jeroboam's plea:

Then the king answered and said to the man of God, “Please entreat the favor of the Lord your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me.” So the man of God entreated the Lord, and the king's hand was restored to him, and became as before.

a. **Please entreat the favor of the Lord your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored:** Under the evident judgment of God, Jeroboam had no use for golden calves or their altars. He knew that his only hope was in the Lord and in His representative.

As the subsequent chapters will show, Jeroboam didn't really repent here; or if he did, it was only for a moment. Wanting to receive something from God is not the same as repentance.

b. **So the man of God entreated the Lord, and the king's hand was restored to him:** To his credit, the man of God showed great grace to Jeroboam. He quickly moved from being under arrest to being an intercessor for his persecutor. This was great mercy from the man of God, and especially from God - who answered his prayer.

We should always be angry about sin. Not just the sin of our leaders but the sin of the people as well. But are we? Often it seems we accept sin, shrug our shoulders about it, and act like it is no big deal. But it is a big deal!

All sin is disobedience against our holy God. All sin breaks the covenant God has established with mankind. All sin is repugnant in God's sight

Sin is the same way. It is dangerous. Unchecked and unforgiven, it leads to eternal doom. So we can't simply shrug about sin. We can't simply accept it as part of the status quo. It must make us angry and we must fight and resist it at every turn.

B. The second lesson we are to learn: We learn from this story that it is always dangerous to defy the Word of the Lord. This is true for kings and prophets, for young and old, for male and female. Jeroboam defied the Word of the Lord. The last verse of our chapter tells us the results:

(1 Kings 13:34) This was the sin of the house of Jeroboam that led to its downfall and to its destruction from the face of the earth. The man of God also defied the Word of the Lord and was torn apart by a lion.

It is always dangerous to defy the Word of the Lord. It is safer to "let goods and kindred go" than to trample underfoot the Word of the Lord. For those who defy the Word of the Lord - like Jeroboam, have no place in the land of the living, have no inheritance in the Kingdom of God.

(Hebrews 10:26) If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left.

There is no forgiveness and no salvation for those who deliberately and persistently defy the Word of the Lord; rather, there is only judgment and destruction.

Chapter 11

Stephen Forgives Those Who Stone Him

Acts 7

Human religious efforts is a fact of life in almost every culture. Yet, Stephen declares it with such effect that he's kept it in its proper roll.

Opponents see in Stephen's preaching a challenge of first-century Judaism, in the law and the Temple, Acts 6:11, 13 - 14. He exposes the falseness of the charges as he affirms his loyalty to God's law and true worship. He reveals how religious effort, is an obstacle to the true knowledge of God's saving provision.

The high priest, probably, Caiaphas, the Sanhedrin's presiding officer, asked Stephen whether the charges of blasphemy are true.

Stephen begins with respect calling them brothers and fathers, yet commanding. He describes the call of Abraham, how the God of glory appeared to him in Mesopotamia (Acts 7:4). Stephen makes it clear that God's presence is not tied exclusively to a particular land or building. God called Abraham to participate in the same independence. He was to leave land and family and come to a land God would show him. He became totally dependent on God to provide his future and his inheritance.

Abraham obeyed in steps, proceeding with his immediate family to a random city in the upper Euphrates Valley at the intersection of an important trade route. After his father Tara's death, he was resettled in Canaan, a location Stephen relates directly to his audience Acts 7:4.

Abraham experienced fulfillment deferred. God did not give him the land, not even so much as could be paced off in one stride (see Deuteronomy 2:5). And He did not give him a child during the natural childbearing years. This was not so much to show that the conventional relationship with God was to be cherished more than the promised inheritance though that may have been seen as part of it. Rather, God wanted to demonstrate to His covenant people that the tangible fulfillment of the promise is all God's doing, whether in the miraculous birth of an

heir, or in the miraculous deliverance from Egypt, which led to entry into the promised land.

True worship becomes bound up with living in a covenant relationship with God and knowing the fulfillment of His promises. After maintaining the gift of the covenant of circumcision, it was a matter of God's covenant faithfulness. Stephen was no blasphemer. He approves of God's covenant ways.

Stephen now lays the groundwork for the fulfillment of the prophecy concerning the nations (Acts 7:6). In the process he continues to unfold the dynamics of God's covenant relationship with His people.

Stephen himself, full of wisdom and grace has been made responsible for food distribution for God's people (Acts 6:3,5,8). The constraints of a covenant relationship, now and then, are God's word of promise and his powerful working to fulfill it, His presence in every place, and the necessity of obedience faith to lay hold of the promise.

Stephen now makes a direct connection between Moses and the Messiah by quoting the “prophet like Moses” prophecy (Acts 7:37/Deut. 18:15); compares Acts 3:22-23 and the Jewish hope. This becomes a powerful argument for the legitimacy of Jesus’ messianic claims.

Stephen has effectively answered the second charge that he speaks blasphemy against God, and this holy place. In so doing, he identifies the real blasphemers: anyone who so venerates the Temple that it ceases to be a place where the transcendent God is glorified and becomes a place where self-glorifying men take pride in what they have done for God.

Religious performance or the fear of pride, is an obstacle to the true knowledge of God's provision of salvation. But more, it sets itself in competition with worship of the one true God by raising up idols. In the end it will wage war on true worship.

Justin Martyr, beheaded for his faith in A.D. 165 said “The more we are persecuted, the more do others in ever increasing numbers embrace the faith and become worshipers of God through the name of Jesus.” Luke's account of Stephen’s death helps us understand that the effect of dying for the gospel has, and in so doing, challenges us to accept as truth these claims. (Luke 23:43)

Stephen's stoning climaxes his witness and introduces his important turning point in the witness of the Hellenistic Jewish Christians of Jerusalem. In his confession, Stephen invites them to see Jesus for who He really is, and in that vision to recognize Him as worthy of worship, and complete devotion, obedience even to death.

Jewish custom prescribes the condemned be given opportunity to confess his sins on his way to execution so that he might have a share in the world to come.

Stephen's declaration revealed his innocence and his Christian grace to those who have wronged him. In prayer he calls on Jesus to take him into His presence at death (Acts 2:21). He echoes the Lord's words of confident trust on the cross and again confesses Jesus.

Whether falling under the weight of a paving stone hurled from above, or deliberately kneeling in prayer, Stephen cries out with a loud voice asking that Jesus not "Establish the sins of his executors" (Romans 10:3). How will this happen? If they will hear and receive the good news, they will be forgiven, and they will not have to face the final punishment for sins standing against them.

Is Stephen's prayer answered? Augustine said, "The Church owes Paul to the prayer of Stephen's prayer." In fact, Saul is one of the adversaries named in the incident. Luke is laying the groundwork for the great victory God will win through Saul's conversion and missionary service.

Like his Lord, Stephen dies at peace with God, himself and the world -- even his enemies. He fell asleep. By showing us how to die he also shows us how to live and models the secret of service showing the power of Christian witness even to death.

The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church. Today the same dynamic is at work, whether in China, since the coming of communism or in Uganda and East Africa with their political turmoil; with the previously predominant religious hostility of Latin America. The fruit of witness under the persecution, even martyrdom, is now being harvested. The gospel borne by spirit-filled Christians is life. Death cannot stop it!

Chapter 12

The Prodigal Son's Father Forgives Him

Luke 15:11 Then He said: "A certain man had two sons.

12. "And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood.

13. "And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.

14. "But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want.

15. "Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16. "And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.

17. "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18. 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you,

19. and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants." '

20. "And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

21. "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

22. "But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet.

23. 'And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry;

24. 'for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.

While this parable touches the heart with the wondrous love of the Father, it is important for the reader to set it in context. Why did Jesus speak this parable? And to whom did He speak it?

The publicans and sinners drew near to hear Him speak, but it was the Pharisees and Scribes, the religious leaders of the time, who murmured, speaking in low voices, uttering secretly and sullenly their discontent, expressing their complaint indignantly. "This man receives sinners and eats with them!"

Here is the parallel between the religious leaders and the elder son, as we recall how the elder son was angry and would not come in to eat. The elder son was appalled that the father would receive the younger son who had devoured his living with harlots and throw a feast for the returning sinner. He alone had been faithful and had not transgressed his father's commandments.

There is nowhere in this parable that indicates that the prodigal son had to be forgiven by the elder brother to be restored to his position as a son. The necessary acceptance had to come from the father.

When the prodigal son finally realizes how foolishly he behaved he humbly returns home. His father, much to his surprise, accepts him back with open arms and throws a party to celebrate his return. The prodigal son's older brother hears noise coming from the house and, after discovering a party was being held for his younger brother, becomes very angry. He refuses to go near the celebration. The father entreats his oldest son not to be angry by saying:

Luke 15:31 "And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.'"

The father wanted his eldest son to rejoice that his brother was home. The father had to remind his firstborn son that even though his younger brother had repented and returned home that he (the older brother) would inherit his wealth.

The parable of "**The Prodigal Son**" has been called...

- a. "**The pearl and crown of all the parables**" (Trench)
 - b. **Evangelium in Evangelio** (i.e., The Gospel within the Gospel)
3. While it is commonly called "**The Prodigal Son**" (prodigal meaning "wasteful") ...It can rightfully be called the parable of "**The Loving Father**" (Wiersbe)

b. For it reveals more about the love of the father than of the sinfulness of the younger son.

4. The parable also reveals much about the heart of the unforgiving elder son, whose purpose in this parable is to rebuke those unwilling to reach out and receive the lost who repent.

For lost and wasted years, you too, may reach out to the Father. He will forgive and restore. Think of a time when someone extended "grace" to you: they could have blamed you or shamed you but they didn't. They gave you love and understanding when you deserved something else. How did it feel? This is the story of a father's grace which witnesses to God's grace in Jesus. In order to have the joy of a forgiven life, one must accept that forgiveness. This is a demonstration of God's love.

Chapter 13

FREEDOM IN FORGIVENESS

I. Biblical references to "forgiveness"

A. Old Testament words

1. *nasah* - "to carry"

Psalm 25:8 Good and upright *is* the LORD; therefore He teaches sinners in the way.

2. *salach* - "to pardon, to forgive"

Psalm 86:5 For You, Lord, *are* good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You.

3. *kaphar* - "to pacify, to satisfy"

Psalm 79:9 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name; and deliver us, and provide atonement for our sins, for Your name's sake!

B. New Testament words

1. *aphiemi* - "to release, to forgive" - Col. 1:14

Colossians 1:14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

2. *charizomai* - "to show favor, to grant grace" - Col. 2:13

Colossians 2:13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,

II. Divine forgiveness of sins

A. Divine prerogative –

Nehemiah 9:17 They refused to obey, and they were not mindful of Your wonders that You did among them. But they hardened their necks, and in their rebellion they appointed a leader to return to their bondage. But You *are* God, ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in kindness, and did not forsake them.

Matthew 9:6 “But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”; then He said to the paralytic, “Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.”

Mark 2:7 "Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Mark 2:10 "But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"; He said to the paralytic,

Luke 5:21 And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, “Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

Luke 5:24 “But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”; He said to the man who was paralyzed, “I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.”

1. Only God can forgive sins because it is His character that has been violated, transgressed and misrepresented.

B. Objectively effected by the death of Jesus Christ

1. Remedial action of Christ's death - He took the death consequences of sin upon Himself vicariously and substitutionally in

order to forgive our sins. Matthew 26:28; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Colossians 2:13; Hebrews 9:22.

2. Ontological basis - no forgiveness apart from the presence of the Forgiver. Not just a benign benefit or a grant of privilege.

3. Continuing application of forgiveness?

a. No other offering for sin - Hebrews 10:18

b. Confess and appropriate - I John 1:9

c. Subjectively received by the receptivity of faith - Luke 3:3; 24:47; Acts 2:38; 10:43; 26:18.

1. Unbelief as basis of unforgiveness - Matthew 12:31,32; Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10

2. Do we need to "ask" for forgiveness? or simply receive such in Jesus Christ, the Forgiver?

3. What if don't "feel" forgiven?

4. What if I can't forgive myself?

III. Forgiving others

A. When the Forgiver lives in us, He wants us to express His forgiving character to others. - Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13

B. As He does so, we learn to appreciate the forgiveness He has extended to us.

C. The Church is the fellowship of the forgiven - I John 1:7 (not the program of the pious).

D. Is God's forgiveness of our sins conditioned or contingent on us for-

giving others? - Matthew 6:12-15; Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4

E. Do we have resentments and bitterness? Vengeance is assuming a right we do not have - Romans 12:19

F. Don't "feel" like forgiving? Forgiveness is a decision of faith to allow Christ to act in us.

G. Forgiveness is not a matter of forgetting. Forgiving is a present action; forgetting is a process of time.

H. There is no mathematical limitation to forgiveness. - Matthew 18:22. When we forgive, then the next offense is always the first.

I. In forgiving we focus on the action of the offense, rather than on the person of the offender, and recognize that God can cause all things to work together for good - Romans 8:28.

J. Forgiveness involves willingness to allow Christ to minister to the other person through us.

K. Forgiveness involves willingness to suffer abuse - Matthew 5:11,12

L. Biblical examples of forgiving others:

1. Joseph - Genesis 42
2. Jesus - Luke 23:34

IV. Asking forgiveness of others

Confessing our sins to another - James 5:16

Asking forgiveness and seeking reconciliation - Matthew 5:23,24

Chapter 14

What Is Forgiveness?

John 8:32 "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

"Forgive him? Are you kidding after what he has done to me? I can NEVER FORGIVE Him!"

"Forgive me? How could God forgive me? You don't know what I done."

WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

Forgiveness is "the act of setting someone free from an obligation to you that is a result of a wrong done against you." For example, a debt is forgiven when you free your debtor of his obligation to pay back what he owes you.

Forgiveness, then, involves three elements:

1. INJURY,
2. A DEBT RESULT-ING FORM THE INJURY,
3. AND A CANCELLATION OF THE DEBT.

All three elements are essential if forgiveness is to take place.

Before we look in more detail at this process, however, we need to trace the sequence of events that lead to bondage when this process is abandoned. This is important because I believe most people who suffer from an unforgiving spirit do not know that unforgiveness is the root of their problem.

Matthew 5:44 "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.

But -- means (above everything else) whatever we feel, whatever we think, within ourselves that is within the fleshly part of us. "Above what anyone has said

or done we are to love, bless, and forgive."

TAKING HOSTAGES

We are all painfully aware of what it means for somebody to be taken hostage. We are outraged when the news of such an atrocity reaches us. And yet when we refuse to forgive others (or ourselves, for that matter), there is a sense in which we hold them hostage.

Matthew 6:14 For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

15. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Notice in Matthew 5:44 the preposition "BUT" - compare Matthew 6:15 the preposition "BUT," both have the same meaning in spite of how we feel or think in the flesh, we are to forgive at all times in order to be forgiving.

Let me explain:

When a person is taken hostage on the international scene, the abductors usually want something. It may be money, weapons, or the release of prisoners. The message they send, in essence is, "If you give us what we want we will give you back what we have taken" There is always some type of condition, a ransom of some sort.

When individuals refuse to forgive others for a wrong done to them, they are saying the same thing. But, instead of holding people hostage until they get their demands, they withhold love, acceptance, respect, service, kindness, patience, or whatever the others value. The message they send is this: "Until I feel you have repaid me for the wrong done to me, you will not have my acceptance." If we go back to our definition, we can see that the element missing from this scenario is cancellation of the debt. Persons who refuse to forgive, refuse to cancel the debt.

THE REAL LOSER

1. A person who has an unforgiving spirit is always the real loser, (But if

you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses - Matthew 6:15).

2. Think about your own experience for a moment. Think back to the last time someone really hurt you or wronged you or took something that belonged to you, whether it was a possession or an opportunity. Immediately following the incident, did you feel like running out and doing something kind for the person, or did you feel like retaliating? Did you consider responding in gentleness, or did you think about letting loose with some well-chosen words?

3. Did you feel like giving in and accepting the situation, or did you feel like fighting for your "RIGHTS?"

If you were honest, you probably identified more with the latter option in each case.

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

23. gentleness, self- control. Against such there is no law.

BUT---THERE IT IS AGAIN!!!!!!

1. No MATTER what a brother or a sister, pastor, friend, mother, or father may say or do we are to bear the fruit of the Spirit.

LOVE

1 Peter 4:8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “**love will cover a multitude of sins.**”

Back to Galatians 5:22-23, In a broad sense Paul’s list here includes all the things we naturally want to hold hostage from the people who have hurt us. We rarely want to give our love to individuals who have hurt us. We certainly have no joy or peace when others have injured us in some way. We are not generally

patient or kind to people who wronged us. We could go right down the list. Paul accurately describes the responses of the unforgiving person:

Galatians 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, (no restraint in morality or sex activities),
20. idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, (bad temper), selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,
21. envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that **those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

Have you ever heard someone say, “I WILL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO MAKE HEAVEN,” and then hear that same person at some point in time say, “I CAN NEVER FORGIVE THEM FOR WHAT THEY HAVE DONE” If we are willing to do whatever it takes to make heaven our home, we must be willing to forgive those of their trespasses against us. THE BIBLE SAYS LOVE SHALL COVER THE MULTITUDE OF SIN. This wonderful salvation started with love and will end with love.

Chapter 15

The Nature of Forgiveness

In Romans 3:10,23, is proof that the Bible doesn't shy away from declaring that sin exists, and that there are consequences to see. John 3:36, and Romans 6:23 shows that forgiveness is not the refusal to acknowledge wrongdoing, nor is it some kind of a “look the other way” act of ignorance.

The nature of forgiveness could be illustrated by the story of the woman caught in adultery, who escapes being stoned to death, because of Jesus' compassionate intervention. The account is recorded in the eighth chapter of the Gospel of John.

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

While Jesus was teaching at the Temple in Jerusalem, the Pharisees and scribes brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They presented her to Jesus and declared that according to the Mosaic law, she should be put to death.

The dramatic show of the impromptu act of Jesus writing something on the ground declared that the people who had not sinned, should cast the first stone. Slowly the crowd of accusers disappeared.

Jesus then turned to the woman and said: “Woman, where are those accusers of you? Has no one condemned you”?

When the woman answered that no one remained to condemn her, Jesus replied: “Neither do I condemn you go and sin no more.” John 8:11

Jesus accomplished two purposes in this story. First, He asserted His Divine authority, because only God has the authority to pardon someone from Divinely-inspired Mosaic law. Second, He issued His pardon of forgiveness, while also acknowledging that sin had indeed taken place.

According to the Bible, forgiveness should not be offered in a way that denies the reality of seeing or ignoring the fact that the transgression has been committed. Rather, the Bible teaches that flawed sinful human beings do not have the moral right to hold grudges or bitterness toward others, and that granting forgiveness puts one on the road to achieving peace and emotional balance as well as his earning the mind of Christ.

Dealing with hurt, anger, and temptations to "set things right" are common challenges faced in society today. Acknowledging the "lasting feelings of anger, bitterness and even vengeance" that wounds from friends, loved ones, and acquaintances can cause, the Mayo Clinic nonetheless warns that "When you don't practice forgiveness, you may be the one who pays most dearly"

Forgiving and Leaving Things Behind

In his letter to the church in Philippi, the apostle Paul wrote: "I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things, which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things, which are before" (Philippians 3:13, KJV).

Forgiveness does not change the past but it changes the pain of the past and — unlocks the door to the future.

Forgiveness. May be a hard thing to do, but it can be so liberating to the soul. What makes it difficult for most of us to do is the way we define it. We think of forgiveness as meaning that we should say all is forgotten and things will go back to what they were.

This Biblical definition of forgiveness is very hard for most of us. How can you forget the unforgettable? How can you forgive the unforgivable? To enjoy the benefits of forgiveness, however, we needn't go that far. All that's really required is that we make the decision to move forward, to let go of the old hurts. We don't have to condone what's been done. What's wrong is still wrong. We don't have to invite the person back into our lives or even be friendly with them. What we do have to do is allow ourselves to release all the negative emotions associated with

that person. As long as we hold onto the pain, we are choosing to allow that person's past actions to continue to hurt us. We can also choose to stop letting them hurt us.

Jesus came to forgive the sins of mankind. To show by example what Godly living is all about. – Matthew 6:12: "Forgive us our debts as we also "HAVE" forgiven our debtors."

We ask God for forgiveness for the wrongs we do, and we say in the Lord's prayer, "Forgive us" as we "have" forgiven those who sinned against us. We are telling the Lord that we "have" forgiven the people who hurt us in life, just as we ask Him to forgive us for the hurts that we also inflicted on others.

Forgiveness is a part of our new nature, which we inherited at the moment we were born again. We became a new creation. Yet some "refuse to forgive" someone who wronged them.

Many are not even aware that because of unforgiveness, they are creating a block to receiving from God. Matthew 6:15: Your heavenly father will forgive you, "IF" you forgive those who sin against you but if you "refuse" to forgive them, He will "not" forgive you

Matthew 7:2: "For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you."-----How can we come seeking healing from an all forgiving God and refuse to obey Him in regard to forgiveness. Forgiveness is the basic principle of what being a Christian is.

References

Holy Bible: King James Translation

13. Freedom for Forgiveness

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