

Consequences Of Unforgiveness

Matthew 6:14 & 15; 'If you forgive people their trespasses and let them go, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive you'.

Matthew 18:15 to 35; Jesus said, "If your brother wrongs you, go and show him his fault, between you and him privately. If he listens to you, you have won back your brother, but if he does not listen, take along with you one or two others so that every word may be upheld by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he pays no attention to them, tell it to the congregation; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a sinner and a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth is bound in heaven, and whatever you release on earth is released in heaven. Again I tell you, if two of you on earth harmoniously agree about whatever they may ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven, for wherever two or three are gathered together in My name, there I AM in the midst of them."

Peter came up to Him (Jesus) and said, "Lord, how many times may my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"

Jesus answered him, "I tell you, not up to seven times, but seventy times seven! The Kingdom of heaven is like a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When the king began the accounting, one was brought to him who owed him 10,000 talents (\$6,000,000) and because he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold with his wife and his children and everything that he possessed, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, begging him, 'Have patience with me and I will pay you everything'. And his master's heart was moved with compassion and he forgave him, cancelling the debt. But that same servant, as he went out, found one of his fellow servants who owed him 100 denarii (\$20), and he caught him by the throat and said, 'Pay what you owe'. So his fellow servant fell down and begged him earnestly, 'Give me time and I will pay you all'. But he was unwilling, and he went out and put him in prison till he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and told their master everything that had taken place. Then his master called him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you and cancelled out all that great debt of yours because you begged me to. And should you not have mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in wrath his master turned him over to the tormentors till he should pay all that he owed. So also My heavenly Father will deal with every one of you if you do not freely forgive your brother from your heart."

Mark 11:25 & 26; 'And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him so that your Father Who is in heaven may also forgive you, your own weaknesses, but if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive you'.

Unforgiveness is one major barrier that stands in the way of many professing Christians to finding effective solutions to problems; to receiving healing; to finding fulfilment and satisfaction; finding peace and the blessings of God. From the death and resurrection of Jesus, all the barriers have been torn down so if there is any kind of barrier to our spiritual progress, something that is holding us back, frustrating us, tearing us down, keeping us from the joy, the peace, the satisfaction, the fulfilment that deep down inside we know we ought to have and long to have; then the barrier is on our side and not on God's side.

Jesus told us what to do to, to put things right between fellow believers. We must go to one another, talk about the problem and forgive one another. There is also a directive to pray and release one another, so whatever is released on earth is also released in heaven. When two believers come together and agree about anything in prayer, what they ask for will be done for them by our Father Who is in heaven. What Jesus was talking about was forgiveness, but these verses are almost always taken out of context by preachers. If we are bound up by unforgiveness, we can't receive from heaven, so if we release people from our unforgiveness, then we can hear from heaven. After Jesus told us what we are to do about our fellow believers, He then went on to the parable about the unforgiving servant. In this passage of scripture, Jesus concentrated solely on forgiveness, that is why verses Matthew 18:18, 19 & 20 should not be used or preached about in any other context.

Jesus warns us of the terrible consequences of the failure to forgive anyone, but especially other Christians. If we want to receive what we want, then first we must forgive. There are many professing Christians who want to be in this place of receiving answers to prayer, but they are not because of unforgiveness. Even poor, longsuffering Job had to forgive his 'friends' and pray for them, and it was not until he did so, that God began to restore his life (Job 42:8 to 10). Psalm 91 is a beautiful description of a right relationship with God. If we want to live in the secret place of the Most High, then forgiveness is the first step and only then will the Lord deliver us from the snare of the fowler (the devil). The opposite is; if we do not forgive, then the Lord will turn us over to the tormentors (Matthew 18:34).

If we want our prayers answered, then we must forgive before we stand praying. If we hold unforgiveness then we cannot agree together. The word 'agree' in this context comes from the root word 'harmony'. It is only when we forgive, we can agree together, and then when we pray together, it is like a harmonious symphony in prayer. That is when God the Father will answer. This type of agreement, in this context is not merely intellectual agreement, it is complete harmony; it is two people being in one spirit together. When two born-again believers come together in prayer, in harmony, the will of God, revealed by the Holy Spirit is there. It is a real promise but we have to meet the conditions. We cannot blithely say, "Come on, let's agree and pray for So-and-so." That can be nothing more than a shallow pretence. It does not produce the required result. Agreement is not just saying 'we agree', it is not keeping silent just to keep the peace; agreement is being in complete harmony with one another in the Spirit. When we come to the place of truly being of one accord, there He is in the midst of us. Unless our relationships with one another are right, we cannot be effective in prayer.

In the parable written in Matthew 18, we see that both servants (Christians) served the same master (Jesus); the fellow servants were greatly distressed (fellow Christians become distressed when they see severe disunity between believers); the fellow servants told their master (fellow Christians prayed); the master was in wrath (He was very, very angry); He handed the wicked, unforgiving servant over to the tormentors (demons) and the last verse clearly shows that Jesus is referring to professing Christians. We can see by this passage of scripture that if we as Christians, refuse to forgive another believer and hold unforgiveness against a fellow believer, God becomes very angry with us, considers us wicked and therefore allows the devil to torment us. The failure to forgive others is not merely sin, it is wickedness in the eyes of God and He hands us over to the tormentors until we repent of that wickedness. Spiritual torment, mental torment and physical torment are all caused by unforgiveness.

It is a terrible fact that many Bible believing Christians who acknowledge Jesus as Lord, are in the hands of tormentors or evil spirits. They don't have peace, don't have joy, suffer from fear, their minds are not at rest, they are sick in their bodies and God will not hear their prayers. It is because the Lord Himself said He would deliver them into the hands of the tormentors and if God has put them into the hands of the tormentors, there is not a preacher on earth who can get them out. Only repentance from the heart of the person can release them. If God has put us into the hands of the tormentors, we will stay there until we have met God's conditions for release and His conditions are for us to forgive everyone and anyone who has offended or hurt us at any time in our life, and especially fellow believers. This is an unwavering condition of God and there is no way around it.

The Lord Jesus set the pattern when He gave us the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9 to 15). We may not necessarily use the same words, but the Lord set the pattern. "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive them who sin against us." We can't change that. We are entitled to ask of God forgiveness, in the same proportion that we forgive others, but not more. The only portion of that prayer that Jesus commented on was forgiveness. This is absolutely clear; if there is anybody who we have not forgiven, we cannot deceive ourselves; we are not forgiven by God. There is no way around that. That is possibly the source of almost all our problems. If we do not forgive others, we do not have full forgiveness. It is true that at the moment we accept Jesus into our lives, we are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), however, if we continue to embrace sin of any type, the Lord will begin His disciplinary processes. He chastises those whom He loves (Hebrews 12:5 to 11) and if we love Jesus, then God will love us (John 14:21 & 23). We must be prepared to be punished, scourged and corrected as children of God. Here are some other examples of the consequences of unforgiveness if the Lord chooses to hand us over to the tormentors.

The torment of sickness and mental illness: It is true that Jesus was wounded for our physical healing (Isaiah 53:5), but if we hold unforgiveness, then we are not forgiven by God and we have no claim to that healing. 'If we hold iniquity in our hearts, then God will not hear us' (Psalm 66:18). Let's put that another way: If we hold unforgiveness in our hearts, the Lord will not answer our prayers for healing. The Lord promises us power and a sound mind, free from fear. 'The Lord has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind' (2 Timothy 1:7). However, if we have been handed over to the tormentors, they can attack our mental health and there are many Christians suffering depression, phobias and other mental illnesses. If we want healing of the body or mind, we need to forgive.

The torment of marriage breakdown and all the misery that brings, can be caused by unforgiveness between spouses. The Lord hates marriage breakdown and men who are violent towards their wives (Malachi 2:14 to 16). When parents refuse to forgive one another, they are deliberately and knowingly making their children suffer the consequences of their hard hearts and unforgiveness, by dragging the helpless, innocent children through the divorce. If you are a Christian, you cannot contemplate divorce and expect God's blessing on your life. You need to forgive your spouse. Once a person says, "I can never forgive them for that" you are

opening the door to the tormentors and in the case of divorce, it is the children who will suffer. Divorce hurts children, so parents need to stop and consider their actions.

The torment of family alienation or estrangement (unforgiving adult siblings). Sometimes parents unwittingly cause such sibling rivalry that when the children grow up, they still hold resentment towards one another. That has to be dealt with by forgiving our parents for their lack of wisdom, and forgiving our siblings. Parents often expect older children to look after younger children. That often causes resentment when the smaller child hurts itself, and the older child is blamed. Eventually, the older child will learn to resent the younger. We personally knew a rather silly woman who told her children off for making too much noise and waking her unborn baby up! By the time that baby was born, he was already resented by the older children because in their minds he had already got them into trouble. Parents often have a favourite child, which in turn causes resentment. However, whatever the reason for the resentment, children have to forgive their siblings and let the past go.

Parents need to forgive their children no matter what they do at whatever age. The following story is absolutely true. A young girl of about eight-years-old wanted to help her mother one day when the mother was ill. The day just happened to be the parents' wedding anniversary. The child carefully cut up all the cat's meat and fed the cat so the mother didn't have to do it, then the child cleaned up the kitchen and went outside to play. When the mother got up from her sleep and wanted to prepare dinner, she saw that the expensive steak, bought earlier that day had disappeared. When she asked the family if they had seen it, the little girl, who thought she had done the right thing by trying to help Mother, admitted she had fed it to the cat. The child was soundly punished and sent to bed without dinner. Twelve months went by, and on the day of the parents' wedding anniversary, the mother reminded the child what she had done the year before and punished the little girl again in the same way. That is not forgiveness. If we are to teach our children about forgiveness, parents need to set the example.

The torment of rebellious children; that is children refusing to forgive parents or not honouring their parents. In the Old Testament, children who spoke ill of their parents were put to death (Matthew 15:4; Mark 7:10). There are many young people who are in some way in rebellion towards their parents. It is the first commandment with a promise. 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Honour your father and your mother – this is the first commandment with a promise – that all may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth' (Ephesians 6:1 to 3). We must honour our parents. There is no way around it. If we do not honour our parents, we will never have it well with us, from God. That applies to everyone. That is divine law and God demands it. We are not expected to accept or condone behaviour that is contrary to God's word such as smoking, alcoholism, violence or witchcraft, but we must still honour our parents just for being our parents. Parents are human and all parents make mistakes, so no matter what our parents have done, no matter what mistakes they have made, everybody must forgive their parents and let it go.

The torment of financial hardship, which can be a real problem. Sometimes we have the most terrible employers. If we are employees who refuse to forgive a nasty employer and are finding it hard to find another job, we may have been turned over to the tormentors and thus are being denied further employment by God until we forgive and repent. We must forgive our employers, pray for them and the Lord will meet our needs. The Lord has something to say to employees and employers. 'Servants (employees), be obedient to those who are your masters (employers, managers, bosses), having respect for them and eager to please them, in singleness of mind as a service to the Lord. Not as though they were watching you and only to please men, but as servants of the Lord, doing the will of God heartily and with your whole soul; serving with goodwill as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that for whatever good anyone does, he will receive his reward from the Lord, whether he is slave or free (employee or employer). You masters (employers), act on the same principle toward them and give up threatening, and using violent and abusive words, knowing that He Who is both their Master and yours is in heaven (watching us), and that there is no favouritism with Him' (Ephesians 6:5 to 9).

There are a host of other problems Christians face. Sometimes we tie our lives in such knots, that even after forgiveness from the Lord comes, it takes a long time to unravel those knots. Sometimes they can never be undone, such as in the case of a divorce, bankruptcy, death of a family member while we were estranged, and so on. All we can do in that case, is continue to walk in our newfound freedom and praise God we have finally been forgiven. Through every difficulty we face, through every trial, test and every time of chastisement, we can hold on to two amazing facts, (1) that the Lord is faithful to us (Psalm 33:4) and (2) all things work together for good for those who love the Lord and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

We can only expect answer to prayer when we have met the conditions Jesus laid out. 'Truly I tell you, whoever says to this mountain, "Be lifted up and thrown into the sea!" and does not doubt at all in his heart

but believes that what he says will take place, it will be done for him. For this reason I am telling you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that it is granted to you, and you will get it. And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him and let it go, in order that your Father Who is in heaven may also forgive you. If you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive you” (Mark 11:23 to 26). That condition is forgiveness; that is absolutely clear. If we want blessing; if we want God to answer our prayers; if we want His forgiveness, then we must forgive others. If we have anything at all against any person, of course that leaves nothing and nobody out, no matter by whom or when we were hurt or offended, we must forgive them. We are not right with God if we hold unforgiveness against anyone, and we will not be ready for heaven. We cannot go to heaven if our sins are not forgiven. The Lord makes it very clear; we are not forgiven if we refuse to forgive others.

‘In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sin’ (Ephesians 1:7). Notice that redemption goes hand-in-hand with forgiveness. If all our sins are forgiven, then we have the total right to redemption, but if there is any area of unforgiven sin then we do not have the total right to redemption. If we have the total right to redemption, the devil has no power over us and no place in us. If there is any unforgiveness in our life, the devil has a legal claim and can torment us, therefore, we cannot claim deliverance until we have freely forgiven and repented. In the Lord’s Prayer, the final petition was to ask for deliverance from the evil one but that came after forgiveness. Get the forgiveness question settled then deliverance from torment is no problem. That is the truth.

‘Jesus breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. Now having received the Holy Spirit, if you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you hold the sins of anyone, they are held”’ (John 20:22). There is a responsibility to being an inbreathed Holy Spirit filled Christian. We become a sin forgiver or a sin retainer. These words of Jesus were not confined to a particular small group, nor was that ability able to be transmitted. It came only by a direct encounter with Jesus. That applies to believers now as much as it applied to the apostles. The first result of receiving the Holy Spirit is: we become a sin forgiver or retainer, and that is the problem. Many of God’s children are holding on to sin. If we have unforgiveness towards another person, we are bound to them. They may be thousands of kilometres away or even dead, but if we have unforgiveness, we are bound up with them, or emotionally chained to them. ‘Whatsoever you bind on earth is bound in heaven. Whatsoever you release on earth is released in heaven’. If we will not forgive someone who has sinned against us, then we are retaining another person’s sin, and then we end up being bound up in our own sin of unforgiveness. We are chained to that person whether we want to be or not. The only way to break the binds of unforgiveness is to forgive that person and release them, whether they are alive or dead, then we will be released from the effects that person’s sin may have caused us. When we forgive, the emotional chains will fall off and the tormentors will scatter.

Some people are very hard to forgive. It may be very hard to forgive neglectful or seriously abusive parents, a violent husband, a paedophile, a drunk driver who ran over and killed your child, thieves who broke into your home and stole irreplaceable heirlooms or an arsonist who burned down your home. No matter what has happened; no matter who did what, we have to forgive them and allow the Lord to repay them. ‘Beloved, never avenge yourselves but leave the way open for God’s wrath, for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine. I will repay, says the Lord”’ (Romans 12:19). We need to let go everything and anything anyone has ever done to us ever, at any stage in our lives. Forgive them and receive forgiveness from the Lord. It is not for their sake we forgive them; it is for our sake. As long as we have the attitude of resentment or hatred for another person, we are bound with knots that no one can untie without a voluntary decision of our will to forgive. We are told to bless those who persecute us; those who are cruel in their attitude towards us (Romans 12:14). Once we have forgiven, that opens the way for the Lord to avenge us. Christians must never hold resentment towards each other. If we hate one another, then we don’t really love God. ‘If anyone says, I love God and hates his brother (fellow Christian) he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God Whom he has not seen’ (1 John 4:20). That love also applies to the Jewish people. If we love God we will love the people whom God chose to bring forth our Messiah, because through the Jews we have our salvation (John 4:22).

If there is any doubt in our hearts forgiveness works, we only need to form a picture in our minds of what life without torment would be like. Freedom from pain, freedom from sickness, freedom from poverty, freedom from fear and being filled with peace, joy and expectation of prayers answered. Compare that to a life with torment, and anyone who wants freedom would jump at the chance. But, and it is a big ‘but’, we have to be willing to let the past go. We have to be willing to forgive. We have to be willing to repent of unforgiveness.

Sometimes we need to forgive ourselves for a past mistake. There is no sin that is too great for God to forgive and sometimes a mistake is not necessarily a sin. Here is one example of a mistake that was not a sin, but the Christian lady concerned could not forgive herself. The lady we will call Emma, was minding a young 18-month-old child. The wee boy was happily watching a child’s program on television, when Emma

went out of the room, prepared the baby's bottle, prepared his bed, ran his bath then went off to the toilet. When she came out of the toilet, the baby was face down in the warm bath. He couldn't be revived and died the next day. That woman had not sinned, but made the mistake of not closing the bathroom door. She could not forgive herself for what she felt was incompetent stupidity, and suffered a complete emotional breakdown. Years later she is still unable to look after children. We all make mistakes; we all do things that we look back on and think, "Why did I do that; why did I say that?" We need to commit ourselves to the loving mercy of God; confess our sin and He is faithful and just to forgive our sins (1 John 1:9). That also includes our guilt, transgressions and iniquities – things we do that are not necessarily sinful, but things that we need forgiveness for. Jesus dealt with them on the cross too (Isaiah 53:5). If we have done something that we need to forgive ourselves for, give it to Jesus and let Him heal the wound.

Unforgiveness is not changed by time. We may have had resentment in our heart for forty or fifty years but we will still have to take the appropriate action. It is not changed by the fact something happened many years ago. Often the most difficult relationships are with those closest to us. Some of the most common problems are between family members. If we have a difficult child or spouse and we need to forgive them several times a day, then we need to do just that. It is for our own sake that we must forgive. Holding on to unforgiveness is sin, so if we let it go, confess it and repent of unforgiveness, we can have an immense feeling of relief and peace; like a ball of steel disappearing from deep within us. Everything can change if we say those simple words: "I forgive ...". Forgiving is not an emotion; it is an action. It is an act of our own will and an utterance of our lips. The born-again believer has the strength from God to be able to forgive. He gives us the strength because it is a requirement of our ongoing relationship with Him. When we forgive, we need to name the person we are forgiving. Once we have said it by faith, it is done. Then we should pray for them just as Job was told to pray for his tormenting 'friends'. Many people who read the words in this text, can have their lives supernaturally changed by the power of God in an instant, if they will just forgive those who have wronged them. We owe a huge debt to Jesus. A debt we can never repay. He died so we can enjoy forgiveness. The least we can do is to forgive others so they too can know forgiveness. The faster we forgive others and show love, reveals how much we love our Saviour. Jesus was speaking about Mary, Martha's sister, when He said; "She loves much because she has been forgiven much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little" (Luke 7:47). That could apply to all Christians. We have all been forgiven much, so we need to love much, and the best way to show love is by forgiving. Remember Jesus' words as He was about to be murdered; "Father, forgive them for they don't know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

Amen and God bless you.

www.bibleabookoftruth.com