**Forgiveness – Obedience That Brings Healing To Broken Hearts**

Scripture: Matthew 5:16, 21-25, 45-48; 7:18; 18:23-35, 30

Corrie ten Boom; the late, renowned Dutch survivor of the infamous Ravensbruck Nazi concentration camp and world-wide beloved speaker on the love of God in dark times; in her book, “***Tramp For The Lord***”, tells the story of what happened when one of the former cruel guards from the concentration camp came up to her after one of her talks and asked for her forgiveness:

“You mentioned Ravensbruck in your talk,“ he was saying. “I was a guard there.”

No, he did not remember me.

“But since that time,” he went on, “I have become a Christian. I know that God has forgiven me for the cruel things I did there, but I would like to hear it from your lips as well, Fraulein,” – again the hand came out – “will you forgive me?”

And I stood there – I whose sins had again and again to be forgiven – and I could not forgive... [but] I had to do it – the message that God forgives has a... condition: that we [must] forgive those who have injured us.

But forgiveness is not an emotion... it is an act of the will... so... woodenly, mechanically, I thrust my hand [into his]... an incredible thing took place: [a] current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood into my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes.

“I forgive you my brother!” I cried. “With all my heart!”

*(“A Tramp For The Lord”, pg 56-57, Corrie ten Boom with Jamie Buckingham – Christian Literature Crusade & Fleming H. Revell Company, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, 1974*)

God forbid we should ever have to go through what Corrie did in her time of incarceration and torture by the Nazi’s at the end of World War II – but we each are faced with people, situations and circumstances that have hurt us in some way – bringing forth feelings of resentment, anger, fear, worthlessness, depression and much else besides.

What do we do with this? What does forgiveness mean and how do we do it?

Recently we have all been through a situation that has brought us pain – the closure of our church. In my talking with various people, and searching my own heart, I know there are a lot of negative feelings associated with that – and hurts that have happened to us as a result. Hurts that need to be forgiven.

Some of those feelings and hurts came from people. Some came from the circumstances – and some came from our looking at our own selves and blaming ourselves for what happened. Forgiving ourselves is often more difficult than forgiving others – but it, too, must be done.

So, why does God allow His children to be put in these situations where they experience pain and hurt that then needs forgiving?

1. **Sometimes God puts us around difficult people because He wants to show his love, mercy, goodness, and forgiveness through us.**

Many don’t know God, nor His love but you can be that vessel that God uses to show people and the world these things (Matthew 5:16). When you love, forgive, and show mercy you are showing God. Because God is love. Showing love to unlovely and unloving people is what God especially wants us to do.

***"He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*** (Matthew 5: 45-48).

When you show love to the unlovely you are acting like children of God. Love is not conditional it is unconditional in every way.

If you do not believe that, then look at how much God has forgiven you and showed His unconditional love towards you all the times that you have messed up! God could have left you with the consequences of all that you have done and you would deserve it. But God's love is unconditional and it does not change thus we should be perfect in love as our Heavenly Father is perfect in love. His love bought our salvation at the greatest cost possible – because He loved us so much!

1. **Sometime God wants us to forgive those that have hurt us to heal their brokenness**

Anyone that is acting negatively towards you is themselves hurting on the inside. ***You can only give out what you have.***

 If you are miserable you will give out misery,

if you are happy you will give out happiness.

***"A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, and a rotten tree cannot produce good fruit."*** (Matthew 7:18).

Those that hurt you are hurting inside and are in misery. You know now that there must be something seriously wrong in their lives for them to act the way that they are acting in the first place. We pray for those that hurt us because we know that they are suffering and in need of help. Their negative actions are their way of crying out for help. The enemy's plan is to use those that are miserable to get us so offended that we can be just as miserable ourselves. “**Misery loves company**”

If you are in unforgiveness you will be miserable because what comes along with unforgiveness is:

Depression

Misery

Hurt

Strife

These will lead you down into a pit of destruction. Forgiveness is God's tool to stop the enemy from getting into your life and making you miserable, and thus causing you to stumble and sin.

1. **What Forgiving Accomplishes:**

#1. **It keeps the devil out of our lives**. We are in Jesus (The son of God) and when we are in Jesus we are in God (God is love). So when we walk out of love (God) we walk out of God's protection for our lives. Mercy and forgiveness is God's tool to keep the enemy out of our lives and keeps his protection on us. When we walk in mercy, love, and forgiveness the enemy cannot come near you because you are surrounded by God's protection (Love).

#2. **We forgive to keep God from throwing us “in prison” and giving us to tortures**. I used to wonder what were these tortures God would give us if we didn't forgive. And why would He do that in the first place? This can be seen in the story of the ungrateful servant in Matthew 18:23-35

“***Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.***

***And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.***

***And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses.***

The tortures God was talking about are the tortures of anger, bitterness, strife, hurt, pain, and negativity. So why would God give us to these tortures in the first place? Is unforgiveness that bad? YES IT IS!! This can be seen in Matthew 5:21-25 :

***"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother has already committed murder and will be subject to judgment.”***

If we do not forgive we have essentially committed murder in our hearts. God will not let a murderer go - He has to throw them in prison because of His perfect justice. Would you let a murderer go? I think not. You will throw them in jail and make them pay the last penny as Jesus said in Matthew 5:26. So in order to keep God from throwing us into prison and and giving us to the tortures of misery, sadness, depression, strife and negativity we must forgive those who have wronged us. Remember what God said in Matthew 18: 33 –

 ***"Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?" Do not be like the ungrateful servant. Forgive and be free from prison and the tortures”***

#3. **We forgive to be like our perfect Heavenly Father, conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ.** God is perfect love and perfect love is rooted in mercy, love and forgiveness. God has not only forgiven you of your debt but doesn’t even remember the situation - where you were, what you did or when you've sinned. And I repeat as God said in Matthew 18:33 ***"Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?"*** Forgive others of their debt to you and do not bring up the situation as God has also done for you. Maybe the people who are unlovely have been molested growing up, maybe they have been hurt by a church member, maybe they have gone through a death of a close loved one, maybe they have experienced betrayal in their lives. Only God knows. The point is, do not look at what people ***do***, but what they must be ***going through***. Mercy is the heart of the law of Jesus.

**HOW TO FORGIVE YOURSELF AND OTHERS.**

Follow the instructions of Jesus. Sometimes you not only have to forgive the person but also the situation where/when it happened, to forgive the whole of circumstances and persons that caused you the pain.

1. **Depend on the Holy Spirit**. "Father God I cannot forgive this person or this situation without your help. Please help me Holy Spirit to forgive this person/situation.”

**2. Give it to God**. “Lord, I give this offense to you. Help me to surrender it from my heart, soul, body and mind. I cannot take care of this, but you promised that if I give it to You that You will give me happiness, goodness, and blessings for the pain in my life. Help me to surrender it to You, Father - giving it to You from my mind body and soul. Help me to walk away from the offense in my mind body heart and soul.”

3. **Pray for them**. “Heavenly Father, I pray that you bless and guide this person. I pray that you increase them in every area of their lives and may they receive Your favor and blessings everywhere they go. I pray for increased happiness and greatness for them. Father please help them in every and in any way ...

4. **Bless them**. “Father God, although they may have hurt me I know that they are one of Your precious creations. I know that they are your child. Bless them in all their ways, Father. Encourgae and guide their footsteps to You and in You.”

5 **Forgive**. “Father God, help me to forgive this person. Help me to not think about it, talk about it, bring it up, reminisce on it and or go back on it but help me to drop it from my mind, heart, body, and soul. Help me a thousand times a thousand if necessary until all that remains for them in my heart is Your love and forgiveness.”

6. **Do something good**. “Father God, put me in a position to do them right and good and not give back evil for evil, but rather good for evil, that Your Name be glorified and that they will know that You are the Author of their salvation.

7. **Do something good**. “Father God, put me in a position to do them right and good and not give back evil for evil, but rather good for evil, that Your Name be glorified and that they will know that You are the Author of their salvation.

8 **Release.** “Father, help me to release all anger, bitterness, pain, resentment, abuse, hurt and negativity that I may have towards this person. Help me to release any desires of pay-back, vengeance, and strife that I may have towards this person. Help me to love them with Your love, not in my human weakness.”

9 **Give them another chance**. “Father God, help me to keep the door of love and forgiveness in my heart open to them. Help me to give them another chance. Help me to not block them and lock them out, and lastly help to not formulate any memory or any memories of the offense or the offenses inside of my heart my soul my body and mind.”

**WHEN YOU ARE TEMPTED NOT TO FORGIVE - REMEMBER:**

**1.** Matthew 18: 23-35

The story of the servant who was ungrateful. The king (God) forgave his servant for a huge debt owed to him. But when that same servant saw one that owed him only a small amount - he caught him by the throat and said to him, pay me all that you owe me! When the king heard this he was very upset and he threw the ungrateful servant into prison saying, AND SHOULD YOU NOT HAVE HAD PITY AND MERCY ON YOUR FELLOW SERVANT AS I HAD PITY ON YOU? **Don't be like that ungrateful servant**. When you are offended by someone, something, or someplace always remember how much debt you owe God (some people owe God in the zillions!) and how He has not only forgiven, but wiped that debt clean and remembers it no more. Should you not do that also?

**2.** Matthew 18: 29

We see here that the servant could not pay. I repeat it again THE SERVANT COULD NOT PAY. **When people offend you they cannot pay you back for the hurt they have caused you**. Thus, do not look to others to meet your needs. Look to God to pay you back for what they, or it, may have done. God is the only one that can pay you back for the hurts that you have endured, so stop looking to people and the situations to pay you back for the hurt you have encountered. God will do that. In the mean time forgive them, the situation, and let it all go because you know that they can not pay you back. And why hold on to a debt that you know can not be paid anyway? To put it a simple way, you have workmans comp, if you get hurt on the job of doing God's will God will pay you back.

**3.** **You are giving the enemy an opportunity to destroy**. Jesus said many, many, many times to forgive – He told His disciples to forgive seventy times seventy. Why? The number one reason is so that the enemy cannot get a toehold in your life. God can only work through love, not hate. So if you are walking in love, mercy, and forgiveness the enemy cannot touch you. As soon as you get out of the will of God, which is to love, that is when the enemy has a door open and an opportunity to come into your life. A preacher once said that the Holy Spirit, which is the spirit of love, must leave the earth first before the evil one comes in the end times. Isn't that a powerful saying? Love must leave first before the evil one can take control. So what does that say about our lives? Once love leaves that is when the enemy has a prime time opportunity to take over and destroy our lives. Forgive and walk in love to keep the enemy out of your life.

**4.** **The story of Corrie ten Boom and the former guard**. We may not want to forgive, but, if we do – the power of the Holy Spirit then works through us – changing hearts and changing lives.

(Closing Prayer)

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Pastor Timothy Roberts; Agape Gospel Fellowship – Fort Atkinson WI