

Lesson 3 - Forgiveness

Let's look at the definitions of 3 words:

“SIN” - missing the mark, the breaking of God's laws, disobedience

“RIGHTEOUSNESS” - being (completely) forgiven; the ability to stand in the Presence of God without guilt, without inferiority, just as if sin never existed!

“FORGIVENESS” – is an act to liberate a person from an obligation we think they owe to us, because of how they have wronged, hurt or offended us.

The act of forgiveness has 3 elements:

- 1) the OFFENCE or “bad thing” done to us
- 2) then consequently, the perceived DEBT owed to us
- 3) the choice to completely CANCEL this debt

These elements also occur in our relationship with God:

- 1) Romans 3:23 speaks of how our offence (or sin) has left us SEPARATED from God's glory (His Presence).
- 2) Romans 6:23 says, “ speaks of the DEBT we owe. The wages (or consequences) of sin is DEATH.
- 3) Romans 3:21, 22, 24, 26 speak of DEBT CANCELLATION and our being declared “RIGHTEOUS” (completely forgiven) by His grace!

This is a FREE GIFT we could NEVER work for! It's personally received by believing that God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us on the cross for us! You receive that sacrifice for yourself, believing that God has raised Him from the dead, FOR YOU!

Let's read 1 John 1:9:

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

This is God's rescue plan for us, bringing us BACK into relationship with Him!

2 Corinthians 5:19 says, “... God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not holding their trespasses (sins) against them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”

Let's read Isaiah 1:18:

“Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the Lord, “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

This illustrates the POWER of God's forgiveness and it's effectiveness!

Let's read Micah 7:18-19:

“Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.”

What does God do with our sins?

He forgets - GOD CHOOSES not to remember! He delights in mercy and chooses to demonstrate His compassion toward us!

(Joke: What if God said, ‘But on April 7th, 1979 at 4pm you did this! And on Sept 14th at 6:30pm you did this!’ Life wouldn't be worth living! No! He CHOOSES to forget!)

God has extended His grace and forgiveness toward us abundantly in Christ Jesus! Grace is God's unmerited favour! And it's also His free gift in Christ!!

Now let's read Romans 5:17,20:

"For if by the one man's offence death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more..."

It speaks of those who have received "abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness!" It also says, "where sin abounded, grace did MUCH MORE abound!" God's gift of ABUNDANT GRACE is STRONGER than sin!

And although this is a FREE gift for us, we must remember, it was still PURCHASED at an EXTREMELY HIGH COST, by JESUS'S PAIN and SUFFERING ON THE CROSS! That means we MUST place the HIGHEST VALUE and PRIORITY on what has been done for us!!

"BEING MADE RIGHTEOUS" or "BEING JUSTIFIED" - means "JUST-AS-IF-I'D" never sinned! We are declared innocent! Blameless and righteous! Being made 'righteous' means we can STAND in the PRESENCE OF GOD, without fear, without guilt, without inferiority, just as if we had NEVER sinned!

Isaiah 53:4,5 says:

"Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed."

Emphasis - Jesus received the punishment so we wouldn't have to! "... The chastisement of our peace was upon Him and by His stripes we are healed" Through His stripes, we have the peace of God for our minds and the healing of God for our bodies!

Romans 5:1 says:

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ..."

FORGIVING OTHERS

By recognising God's LOVE and FORGIVENESS toward us, it makes it SO MUCH EASIER to forgive others!

Matthew 18:21-22 says:

"Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

Everyone in this life has been hurt by others at some point. Similarly, we've all hurt someone at some time in our lives. Emotional wounds can make people unhappy, frustrated or angry. Unforgiveness can breed bitterness and resentment. This in turn can interfere with God's vision and plan for our lives.

It can hold us back in life and cause us to erect defensive walls of isolation in the hope that no one will hurt us again. These defences can come crashing down by understanding God's overwhelming love for us and those around us!

Even as Christians we can still be vulnerable, but the difference is made in how we respond to those who hurt us.

Ask yourself this question: "What do people in the world often do?"

They become offended. Defensive barriers are raised. Friendships are broken. People become separated through time and unforgiveness. Sometimes years pass by, yet people are still experiencing the pain and seemingly can't get over it. (Memories can rehearse the offence and actions of others over and over again in our minds.)

Unforgiveness is self-destructive. Even medical science tells us this. It releases all the wrong hormones in our brain and affects our immune system. It's an emotional cancer. It's like drinking poison yourself, but expecting the other person to get sick.

UNFORGIVENESS HAS NO PLACE IN THE LIFE OF A BELIEVER WHO FOLLOWS CHRIST'S EXAMPLE

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, they don't know what they do."

WHAT SHOULD WE DO:

- 1)** Firstly, we must choose to forgive. God did. Jesus did. We should extend the same grace toward others that God extended toward every one of us.
- 2)** Secondly, if you feel emotionally hurt, admit it to your loving Heavenly Father. (He understands!) Turn that hurt or pain over to Him wholly and completely. He is FAITHFUL to make us WHOLE! He CAN HEAL our hearts with His LOVE and GOODNESS!
- 3)** Thirdly, try to restore the relationship as much as is possible. What would Jesus do? Show them God's love. Be at peace in your heart toward that person, even if they are not willing to be at peace with you.

Romans 12:17-21 says:

"Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 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. Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Ephesians 4:26-27 says:

"Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, 27 nor give place to the devil." Address unforgiveness immediately!

Satan looks for an opportunity to wreak havoc in our lives. One way we shut the door of opportunity on him is to walk in forgiveness, allowing GOD'S GOODNESS TO OVERCOME evil, anger, bitterness and resentment. GOD IS TOO GOOD to allow these things into our lives!

Proverbs 4:23 says:

"Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life."

The Message Bible says, "Keep vigilant watch over your heart." Why? Because unforgiveness is a "blessing-blocker" that robs our peace and joy!

When we are "born-again" we have God's love, His joy, His peace, His patience and His kindness within!

Galatians 5:22-23 tells us:

"But the fruit of the Spirit [the result of His presence within us] is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."

We can draw on Christ's presence and strength within at any time to help us love and forgive others, just as the Lord has done for us!

Colossians 3:12-15 says:

"Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful."

Romans 5:5 says:

“Such hope [in God’s promises] never disappoints us, because God’s love has been abundantly poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

Proverbs 10:12 tells us:

“Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins.”

So remember, love is a decision, forgiveness is a decision, not just a feeling. Determine that ANYONE WHO OWED YOU A DEBT IS FREE! Pray and DELIBERATELY tell GOD who you forgive! THAT’S BRILLIANT!!! And NOW, give your WONDERFUL HEAVENLY FATHER THANKS THAT YOU ARE FORGIVEN!!! LET HIS JOY FILL YOUR HEART!

LET CHRIST’S LOVE AND JOY FLOW THROUGH YOU EVERY DAY!!!

MEMORY VERSE: 1 John 1:9

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”