

Forgiveness

The word forgiveness sounds like a very simple word; however it has a far reaching meaning. Some people use it very loosely. How many people do you know that say, “I forgive you”, but actually give it no real deep thought to what they had just said? It was just an expression without much meaning from their hearts. Why is it so difficult for some people to even say, “I forgive you or ask for forgiveness”?

The bible gives forgiveness much thought and meaning. Several times in the bible forgiveness is one of the conditions to salvation. When you ask God to forgive you, it *must* be from your heart or God will not hear your cry for forgiveness.

God says, forgive first, then you will be forgiven. But, you must ask. Along with forgiveness is forgetting, as we Christians want to be like our Savior Jesus Christ. If forgetting is not part of forgiving, then asking for forgiveness has no meaning, if one holds a grudge and does not forget. It is clear that your request did not come from your heart and is not sincere.

Since we are all sinners, we must have God’s forgiveness or we could never reach heaven upon our demise.

Just think, If God kept all our request of forgiveness only to throw them up in our faces again and again, without letting go, then, the shed blood of Jesus on the cross would have absolutely no meaning.

Now let us look at a person’s request on forgiving your brother. In Matthew 18:21 (NIV) Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he

sins against me? Up to seven times?" In Matthew 18:22 (NIV) Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."

Then in Matthew 18:26-35 (NIV) ²⁶the servant fell on his knees before him.' "Be patient with me," he begged, "and I will pay back everything." ²⁷The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go." ²⁸But when the servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. "Pay back what you owe me!" he demanded. ²⁹His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him', "Be patient with me, and I will pay you back." ³⁰But he refused. Instead, he went off and the man thrown in prison until he could pay the debt. ³¹When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. ³²Then the master called the servant, he said, "I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. ³³Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?" ³⁴In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. ³⁵"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

Forgiveness has to come from your heart, with full intent to forgive and forget. Hate has close relationship with not forgiving, with full intent to forgive and forget. Hate has a close relationship with not forgiving. If you truly hate someone, it is almost impossible to forgive, until you have set the hate aside. If you keep carrying hate within you; you will become hard-hearted and as that point, you will start having physical problems, because of unforgiveness,

and the hate will consume your entire body and mind. It is possible to forgive even yourself for the damage you have done to yourself.

Now I would like to look at my own experiences during World War II. When I came home, after the war ended, I hated every Japanese person on the face of the earth. Each time I saw a Japanese manufactured automobile pass me by, I remembered the hate.

Forgive the Japanese, "*no way*", I said. I found it excused not to forgive. Such as, the Japanese have not apologized for what they had done to me. I wanted to get even with them.

To understand hate, one has to think how it affects each person. However, in most cases hatred follows the same pattern of destruction for most everyone. Each person may give different definitions of what hate means to them. Generally it is to describe a dislike for a person or something you wear, or maybe for something you eat. When hate is used to illustrate a dislike for items you use or eat that kind of hate can be corrected by not eating or using them. Nevertheless, when hate is used to depict *how you feel* about another person or groups of people the meaning has a different concept.

Hate can have far reaching outcome that goes to your inner soul. It is therefore easy to allow hating someone into becoming a driving force in your thinking and personality. The more you allow the hate to control your thoughts the deeper the feeling of detesting is embedded into your thought and that gives your desire for hate to be increased. Once hatred is established toward a person or group of people, it is very hard to change those feelings that develop a part of your personality. Every time you think about this person or persons, there is a flare-up of your inner feelings that reminds you how much you hate them. These people will

not change to satisfy your feelings or they may not know how you feel or even realize that you exist. Whenever hate has secured within the person, they will watch and listen to everything a person will say or do to fuel their appetite and continue hating. All to justify themselves for hating in the first place.

Hate can freely grow within a person so that they will become enslaved to hatred in more forms than one. Whereby they start looking for reasons to hate others and that is when it becomes apparent that you will lose the chance in life to have what is complete freedom. They will find it resistant to simply imagine the power of forgiveness. Their reasoning measures not being able to recognize right from wrong. It assuredly progresses uncomfortably, at which moment meeting others, they find themselves looking for a motive to hate and their entire being turns from positive thoughts to only negative ones.

Nearly all people will take the easy way or so called the *high road*. They get so entrapped into hate that getting rid of it is more trouble than keeping hate going. Some people find it amusing to live a life of hate. These type of people will begin putting contrary people in categories people and express their emotions as, *"I hate Bill more than I hate Frank, and you know how much I hate Frank"*.

Anger and hate share some of the same qualities. It is easier to hate when you experience a quick temper. There is increased tolerance when anger is restrained, thus less hate. For many times, if you stop to reason circumstances that include anger or hate it is less likely to defeat you.

Despite all this intense hating, came a time I wanted to free myself of this pain and I had to start with my inner self. Forgiveness is a hard way to go, I thought, nevertheless, it must be done. Forgive the Japanese, along with forgiving myself for suffering and turn to God's words, *"forgive and your will be forgiven"*.

In shaping a positive determination to shifting my negative thoughts, I found that my heart easily accepted love and my health began improving. The burden of hate was lifting from the bottom of my spirit. I felt freedom within myself that I never known before. After these many years of hate, I have discovered sincere freedom that was promised by God in the Bible.

Let us talk a look at what God's word says in Matthew 5:44 (NKJV) *"But 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,"*

In Matthew, 6:24 (NCV) *"No one can serve two masters. The person will hate one master and love the other, or will follow one master and refuse to follow the other. You cannot serve both God and worldly riches."*

Now let us think for a moment, we would be better off if the word hate was never used. If you follow the word in the Book of Matthew, *"Love your enemies"*, who would there be left to hate. I had heard someone say, I do not hate, but one person. But, if there is any hate at all, it is just as bad as hating a little, as hating a lot. The little may lead to others to hate, so why not wipe it out and dismiss it from your mind.

This reminds me of a story of a mother that was trying to teach her children not to hate, even a small amount. One child shared with her mother one day; “there are very few people I hate”. The mother replied, “Well a little is just as bad as a lot”. So the mother decided to teach her children a lesson on hating.

She baked a large batch of cookies, she told her children; “I hope you like cookies have baked for all of you children”! One child asked her mother; “What kind of cookies did you bake mother?” Mother said; “Oh nothing much, my dear, just some chocolate chip cookies, your favorite! However, did I mention I added an extra ingredient to enhance the flavor?” The children all asked their mother; “What did you add?” “Oh no, I just added a little dog food to the batch, just a small amount, like the way you hate, just a little.” All the children refused to eat the cookies, even though the aroma of just baked cookies smelled wonderful.

This hate took front stage with me, which became a way of life; the more I hated one thing I would look for other things to hate. It changed my personality, it exhausted my flesh and as a result, I became very sick. I lost friends and most of all I separated myself from God and His grace.

I spent much of my time trying to think of reasons to keep from forgiving, that I turned away from God’s love.

It was not until I asked God to forgive me for the hatred. I had for the Japanese. Then my life started to take a different meaning. I discovered I could love greater dimension than I could ever hate. It became easy for my heart to forgive and forget.

Now let each of us have a chance to tell what forgiveness has done in our own personal lives. When Jesus hung on the cross dying, he pleaded to His Father; *“Forgive them Father for they know not what they are doing.”* Luke 23:34 (NCV)

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