

THE POWER
OF
FORGIVENESS

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Crossroads Full Gospel
International Ministries

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Bracketed comments following some scriptures assist the reader in understanding the intended meaning of these verses

We acknowledge the additional works of the various Scholars and Bible Commentaries used in conjunction with the College material. This is not to say that we agree with all their theology, but we certainly value their contribution to the Body of Christ.

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THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS

Background Reading – Matthew 6:14-15, Mark 11:24-26

God has given us the Bible as our “Manual of Life” so we can know right from wrong, so we can make informed choices and not let our feet tread on unstable ground. Therefore we need to look into God’s Word diligently so we can know what God requires of us, and then live accordingly.

DELIVERANCE FROM UNFORGIVENESS

In order to have the Lord fulfill His Word in our lives, we, with the help of the Spirit’s Divine energy, need to walk in humility, forgiving others who have wronged us and repenting of sin (Isaiah 55:7; 1 John 1:9).

Unforgiveness can weigh heavy on our hearts, and can breed bitterness and destructive emotions, hindering our spiritual growth and robbing us of our peace. Holding onto unforgiveness will hinder our fellowship with God and prevent us from experiencing the fullness of God’s mercy and grace.

Scripture tells us that God is unable to respond to a man or woman who is walking in unforgiveness or pride - or harbouring blatant unconfessed sin (Psalm 51:16-17; Isaiah 57:15; Isaiah 59:2; Mark 11:25-26; James 4:6). (This of course is dependent on the degree of sin being practised.)

Let’s read from Mark Chapter 11 which speaks about not harbouring unforgiveness towards others:

MARK 11:24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever you desire (in this case forgiveness), when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them.

MARK 11:25 *And when you stand praying, forgive, if you have ought against any* (implying, that the above Promises will not be honoured, if we harbour unforgiveness): ***that your Father also Who is in Heaven may forgive you your trespasses*** (forgiveness from the Lord on our part, is predicated on our forgiving others). (E.S.B.)

MARK 11:26 *But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father Who is in Heaven forgive your trespasses (sins).*

Jesus shows us in Mark 11:25 that when we come to receive from God, we need, in the power of the new Nature of which we are now partakers, to forgive anyone who has wronged us, and to let go of all unforgiveness, bitterness, hatred, resentment, etc. In fact all traces of resentment and unforgiveness need to be uprooted entirely, for a resentful and unforgiving spirit will frustrate the grace of God and block God's power from operating and setting us free (Hebrews 12:15).

MATTHEW 6:14 *For if you forgive men* (it must be the God kind of forgiveness) ***their trespasses*** (large sins), ***your Heavenly Father will also forgive you*** (forgiveness rests totally on the Atoning Work of Christ; it is an act of sheer Grace): (E.S.B.)

MATTHEW 6:15 *But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses* (if we want God to forgive us, we must at the same time forgive others; if not, His forgiveness for us is withheld; consequently, such a person is in jeopardy of losing their soul). (E.S.B.)

Quite often people do not forgive because they are afraid of being hurt again - so they allow fear to stop them from forgiving. Mark 11:24 tells us that we must believe in order to receive - for we cannot receive that which we have not believed for. Relating this verse to forgiveness, we can believe that God will empower

us to forgive when we have problems with forgiveness. Some people can, at times, only forgive as they allow God to empower them to do so, through the grace of the Divine Nature. We need to forgive by faith, not by fleshly feelings. We need to stand on the Word of God declaring its promises in this area and dismiss and cast down all thoughts of anger, resentment, revenge, etc. Boldly confess your liberation and continue to trust God and His liberating power. The evidence and assurance will follow. His grace is sufficient for every situation.

“...Quite often people do not forgive because they are afraid of being hurt again - so they allow fear to stop them from forgiving. . .”

Let's turn to Ephesians Chapter 4 where the Apostle Paul makes mention of the importance of forgiveness in the life of the Believer:

EPHESIANS 4:31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice (as the Believer puts His Faith in the Cross and keeps his Faith in the Cross, giving the Holy Spirit latitude to work, these evil things can then be “put away” from our lives): *(E.S.B.)*

EPHESIANS 4:32 And be you kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another (be quick to forgive), ***even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.*** (Christ's forgiveness of us is to always be the basis of our forgiveness of others.) *(E.S.B.)*

As we accept and digest God's truths wholeheartedly and reject our old carnal ways of thinking, then act upon this renewal in faith, thanking God for the empowerment provided by the Divine Nature, we can experience a type of deliverance called “the salvation of the soul.” This means that no evil can continue to

oppress us because of wrong beliefs or wrong thinking. It entails complete freedom from oppression of the mind, e.g. freedom from fear, anxiety, worry, depression, anger, hatred, unforgiveness, resentment, etc.

We must always remember, however, that it is the grace of God at work in us (having come to us because of Christ's finished work) that brings about our victory and God's pleasure.

THE REALITY OF THE SIN NATURE

It is obvious that the sinful or fallen Adamic nature is still a reality in Christians' lives, and we are quite able to allow the sin nature to dominate us at a conditional level.

In this earthly life, we can never eradicate the sin nature from our lives. Although the sin nature has been dealt with legally, during this life we, as Christians, need to continually deny its expression by not yielding to it.

“ . . . Although the sin nature has been dealt with legally, during this life we, as Christians, need to continually deny its expression by not yielding to it. . . ”

It is quite obvious then that as Believers, we cannot afford to be passive. We need to put this nature to death by denying its expression. To do this we need to recognize whatever fleshly weaknesses we may have (be they problems with anger, resentment, unforgiveness, bitterness, pride, egotism, etc.), and to know and apply the Word of God to each situation in which we find ourselves responding in an ungodly way. Then as we yield to God, applying His Word (according to His prescribed order of victory, which includes having a proper focus for our faith) and seeking His empowerment, we will gain the victory we seek. This may take time, particularly if we have a persistent weakness, or need to be taught or refreshed in God's Word according to that

need. Nevertheless, the victory will eventually come as we put in a concerted and consistent effort against the flesh, by choosing to yield to the Spirit of Truth within us, and refusing to allow the flesh to dominate us. In this way the Divine Nature will enmesh with our human nature and give us the power to live a holy life.

Note: If we do not continue to renew our mind and feed our spirit with the Word of God, our resolve to do what is right will become weakened so that we will choose less of what God desires and more of what the flesh desires. We all need to feed ourselves with the milk and meat of the Word on a daily basis so that we will be equipped to deal with all that comes against us, including fleshly lusts. Without proper nourishment, our tank will be empty and we will fail more often.

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Being fed on and thus built up in God’s Word will help us choose to take this righteous pathway, day by day.

OUR REAL SELF

All the wrongs of this world are a direct result of the Fall which introduced sin into the world and the power thereof. Man deals with sin and its consequences in a totally different way than he should. Sin and its consequences should not be dealt with at an intellectual level or an emotional level, but rather at a spiritual level. In this the Blood of Jesus Christ must be applied to man’s sin in order that forgiveness from the One Who matters will come. Many also need to forgive others in order to be released from hurt and bondage. Some people who harbour sins of resentment and unforgiveness need God’s power to help them forgive so they can be liberated from the effects of the past. To find himself,

however, and get right with himself and his fellowman, a man must first get right with his Creator. It is his vertical relationship that must first be restored before he can properly deal with his horizontal relationships.

Even as Christians, with our vertical relationship intact at a legal positional level, because of ignorance or doubt and unbelief, and through listening to our emotions, we often prevent Heaven's power (that the Cross has afforded us) from coming to our rescue. Allowing our emotions to rule us will cause us to operate in the flesh, at best, and certainly prevent the Spirit from doing His wonderful work of leading and empowering (Romans 8:1).

“. . . Sin and its consequences should not be dealt with at an intellectual level or an emotional level, but rather at a spiritual level. . . ”

Many people connect their emotions to, or even equate the full range of their emotions with, their real self. If that were true, why then when we Christians leave this physical world will nothing negative follow us, including any negative emotions (Revelation 21:3-4)?

Certainly we are emotional beings and are meant to be this way, otherwise we could never love or have passion. So the question is not as a person whether we should feel or not feel about certain issues and people. The question is what and how we should feel or be emotional about. So if we have a bad day full of negative emotions, we should not own these emotions. We should not connect them to our real self. Sure they are connected to us - but that temporary part of us will one day dissolve and disappear. For example, in Heaven we will never experience negative fear. Therefore the particular aspect of our human thinking that causes negative emotions, and indeed the emotions themselves, do not depict the real person!

On the other hand, we can never think that we have immunity in regard to actions that we undertake based on an emotional state that has dictated to us how to respond - and we have succumbed to these emotions. We are always responsible for our actions. For example, in a fit of anger or rage, a Christian may attack someone verbally. Obviously they will have invited this emotion into their daily life at that time, having meditated on particular thoughts and then accepted them. The result is accepted thinking that has produced anger in that person's life - and they will live with the consequences of it. While this unrighteous anger is not a part of the Christian's real self, and will not go to Heaven with them, they are still responsible for the wrong they have done through allowing the emotion to dictate their response.

“. . . So if we have a bad day full of negative emotions, we should not own these emotions. We should not connect them to our real self. . . ”

God has not left us without hope or power. We can deal with the issues and complexities of life if we would but trust in His Word and so lean not on our understanding, but rather on God's reasoning and wisdom. As we have seen, the Word exhorts us to:

PROVERBS 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding (your own ideas, thoughts, opinions, plans, etc.).

PROVERBS 3:6 In all your ways acknowledge Him (seek His face), and He shall direct your paths.

PROVERBS 3:7 Be not wise in your own eyes (and therefore self-sufficient): fear (reverence so as to obey) the Lord, and depart from evil.

GOD'S DESIRE TO FELLOWSHIP

The Bible reveals that God desires to fellowship with us and manifest Himself to us:

REVELATION 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.

JOHN 14:21 He who has My commandments, and keeps them, he it is who loves Me (the measure to which we obey the Lord's commands in His strength is here defined as the measure of our love for Him): and he who loves Me shall be loved of My Father (John 14:6), and I will love him, and will manifest (reveal) Myself to him (means to fully disclose His Person, Nature, and Goodness to the Believer : E.S.B.).

Jesus said to knock (at the door of truth) and the door will be opened - but we need to knock with a sincere, unbiased heart, really desiring to know.

MATTHEW 7:7 Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it (the door) shall be opened unto you.

MATTHEW 7:8 For everyone who asks (believing) receives; he who seeks (truth) finds; and to him who knocks, the door (of truth) will be opened.

God communicates with us primarily through His Word and personal fellowship. This is why it is so important to have a daily study program. We also need to hear the preaching of the Word under the Anointing of the Spirit, and to join in corporate fellowship in the Lord with fellow Believers. Through all these avenues, God will speak to us - but we must ready ourselves to hear His voice of direction and correction.

As we spend time in His Word, and in meeting together with our Heavenly Father on a daily basis, we can allow God to share more of Himself with us. Indeed the Lord desires to fellowship with each of His children, and to share His love with us - and He will reveal Himself to us as we seek Him, day by day, again with a true, sincere and open heart.

So immerse yourself in the Word of God - for it reveals to us our Heavenly Father's desire, character and nature. Know that He loves you and would have you well in every area of your life, beginning with spiritual health and ending with physical health. Understanding this, we can then seek the victory we need in our lives, basing our faith on the Word of God and following its instruction, digesting the Word as medicine for our souls. When we do this we are indeed esteeming God's Word and giving Him glory.

May you have the victory in Christ. Amen!

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