

FORGIVENESS & FREEDOM

SEVERAL WEEKS AGO IT WAS MENTIONED IN A SERMON THAT WHEN SOMETHING COMES UP IN THE BIBLE A NUMBER OF TIMES, IT IS MOST LIKELY TIME TO SIT UP AND PAY ATTENTION! WE CAN ALL RECALL A VERSE ON SUBJECTS SUCH AS LOVE, WORDS AND THE TONGUE, SERVING OR TRUSTING GOD. **THESE SUBJECTS ARE IMPORTANT, WHY? BECAUSE GOD KNOWS IF WE FOLLOW AS A DISCIPLE OF HIS TEACHINGS THAT WE WILL A BETTER PERSON AND BE ABLE TO HELP OTHERS.** THE BOOK OF PROVERBS IS FULL OF THESE "NUGGETS OF WISDOM" JUST LIKE THE ONE I READ FROM PROVERBS 17:9 *"Love prospers when a fault is forgiven, but dwelling on it separates close friends."*

WHY DO WE IGNORE SUCH CLEAR ADVICE? WHY DO WE CHOOSE TO NOT DO THE RIGHT THING? AND WHY THEN DO WE WONDER WHY OUR LIFE IS A STRUGGLE AND IT SEEMS PEOPLE OUR AT ODDS WITH US?

ONE OF THE BIGGEST HURDLES THAT CAN AFFECT OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH GOD AND OTHERS IS WE WILL NOT FORGIVE! WE CHOOSE AND I SAID **CHOOSE NOT TO FORGIVE. GOD HAS GIVEN VERY CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS ON THE SUBJECT OF FORGIVENESS.** AFTER ALL, EVERY WEEK, EVERY WEEK WHEN **WE SAY THE LORD'S PRAYER**, THE VERY WORDS OF JESUS CHRIST WE SAY **"AND FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO HAVE TRESPASSED AGAINST US"**. *DO WE TAKE THESE WORDS TO HEART AND PRACTICE THEM OR ARE THEY JUST SOME REALLY NEAT WORDS TO SAY ON A SUNDAY MORNING AND THEN FORGET? YOU SAY PASTOR THERE'S THIS PERSON I JUST CAN'T FORGIVE!!.....REALLY? WHERE IS THE GRACE OF GOD? WHERE IS THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?*

WHERE IS OUR FAITH IN THE WORDS OF SCRIPTURE THAT *"For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength."* OR *"What is impossible for people is possible with God."* **YOU MAY THINK YOU CAN NEVER FORGIVE THAT PERSON FOR WHAT THEY HAVE DONE, BUT THAT CLEARLY IS WHAT GOD IS TELLING US TO DO IN THE SCRIPTURES!** IF WE ARE DISCIPLES OF JESUS THEN HIS TEACHING IS CLEAR WHEN WE READ HIS WORDS IN MATTHEW 6:14-15 *"For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."*

FOR US WE CANNOT HOLD GRUDGES, HATE SOMEONE, NOT BE AT PEACE WITH THEM OR SPREAD GOSSIP ABOUT THEM! AGAIN IN MATTHEW 18:15 *JESUS TALKS ABOUT MEETING WITH A BROTHER OR SISTER AND WORKING IT OUT* AND LISTEN TO MATTHEW 5:23 *IF YOU ARE AT THE ALTAR AND REMEMBER SOMEONE HAS SOMETHING AGAINST YOU, GO AND RECONCILE WITH HIM!* WE CAN APPLY THIS IN OUR LIFE.

WHEN WE COME FOR WORSHIP WE NEED TO RECONCILE AND FORGIVE, ESPECIALLY WITH OTHERS IN THE BODY. FROM THESE VERSES I HAVE READ YOU GET THE FEELING JESUS IS COMMANDING US BY GIVING US THE "HOW TO" FOR FORGIVING. TO ME, FORGIVENESS IS ONE OF THE HARDEST THINGS TO DO IN OUR SPIRITUAL WALK BUT WITH THE GRACE OF GOD WE CAN DO IT!!!

A SIMPLE ILLUSTRATION OF THIS IS FROM THE FAMOUS AUTHOR SIR WALTER SCOTT. Sir Walter Scott had difficulty with the idea of "turning the other cheek." But Jesus' words took on special meaning one day when Scott threw a rock at a stray dog to chase it away. His aim was straighter and his delivery stronger than he had intended, for he hit the animal and broke its leg. Instead of running off, the dog limped over to him and licked his hand. Sir Walter never forgot that touching response. He said, "That dog preached the Sermon on the Mount to me as few ministers have ever presented it."

IN UNDERSTANDING "FORGIVENESS" WE MUST FIRST REALIZE WHAT IT IS NOT.

- * *forgiveness is not saying that what the person did was okay and pretending nothing ever happened.*
- * *forgiveness is not relieving the person of responsibility or consequences they may face because of their actions.*
- * *forgiveness is not restoring instant trust or emotional healing.*
- * *by forgiving, trust must be earned back over time and healing also takes time.*
- * *forgiveness is not forgetting, however over time you can view the situation with "neutral" feelings and not get mad or emotional when talking about it.*
- * *forgiving someone does not mean you "hold" it over them and is some lever you use on them.*

WHAT FORGIVING IS, IS AN ACT OF OBEDIENCE TO GOD, BECAUSE WE TRUST HIM, KNOWING HE HAS OUR BEST INTERESTS AT HEART. THE VERSES FROM JEREMIAH REMINDS US THAT HE HAS PLANS FOR OUR WELFARE TO GIVE US A FUTURE AND A HOPE. THERE IS THAT FOUNDATION FROM WHICH ALL WE DO IS BUILT ON - OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND JESUS CHRIST. OUR RELIGION IS NOT ABOUT HOW MUCH MONEY WE GIVE TO THE CHURCH, HOW MANY COMMITTEES WE SERVE ON OR HOW MANY TIMES WE SIT IN THE PEW ON SUNDAY MORNING. NO, IT IS ALL ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH GOD AND OTHERS.

IF WE DO NOT FORGIVE THERE IS A ROADBLOCK TO OUR RELATIONSHIPS ON OUR SPIRITUAL PATHWAY. NOT FORGIVING AFFECTS MANY AREAS OF OUR LIVES. GOD KNOWS THAT, AND THAT IS WHY IT IS IMPORTANT NOT TO BE A SLAVE TO UNFORGIVENESS.

BY FORGIVING WE GIVE UP THAT RIGHT TO GET EVEN. WHEN WE FORGIVE WE CAN MOVE FORWARD. DID YOU NOTICE WHEN SOMEONE IS UNFORGIVING THEY BRING IT UP TIME AND TIME AGAIN. I BELIEVE THEY ARE TRYING TO GAIN SUPPORT SO THAT THEY DO NOT HAVE TO FORGIVE. THEY CAN'T MOVE ON FROM IT.

A REASON IT IS GOD'S DESIRE FOR US TO FORGIVE IS, HE KNOWS THE BENEFITS WE CAN RECEIVE. BY FORGIVING, IT ALLOWS US TO BEGIN HEALING. WE LET GO OF RESENTMENTS AND GRUDGES. BY HOLDING ON TO EITHER IF SOMEONE BEGINS TO GO DOWN THAT PATH WE WILL GET ON THEM AND THEY WILL WONDER WHERE THAT SUDDEN ANGER CAME FROM. IT CAME FROM THE FACT WE HAVE NOT LET GO OF A GRUDGE OR RESENTMENT WE KEEP WITH SOMEONE ELSE.

ONE THING WE MUST REMEMBER IS, **FORGIVENESS IS A CHOICE**, NOT AN EASY ONE, BUT IT AN ACT OF THE WILL *BECAUSE IF WE WAIT FOR A FEELING THAT WE SHOULD FORGIVE WE MAY NEVER FORGIVE SOMEONE.* IN JESUS' OWN WORDS OF MATTHEW 18 HE TOLD *PETER TO FORGIVE SEVENTY TIMES SEVEN.* MANY MORE TIMES THAN THE JEWISH LAW ADVOCATED. THE ACTUAL NUMBER WAS NOT THE IMPORTANT TEACHING, BUT THAT WE FORGIVE WITHOUT ANY FIXED NUMBER IN MIND. COLOSSIANS 3:13 I READ TELLS US *"Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others."* DOESN'T SOUND LIKE WE HAVE AN OPTION!

THERE IS AN INTERESTING AN VERY **VIVID ILLUSTRATION OF FORGIVENESS** I CAME ACROSS WHEN AT SCHOOL AND THE TEACHER SHOWED US A VIDEO OF ADAM HAMILTON'S. IT GOES LIKE THIS...

HERE IS A BACKPACK THAT REPRESENTS OUR HEART AND SOUL. THESE ROCKS HERE ON THE TABLE REPRESENT OUR HURTS. AS YOU CAN SEE *SOME OF THE ROCKS*



ARE LITTLE. THESE HURTS HAPPEN IN OUR FAMILY, OUR MARRIAGE AND WITH OUR FRIENDS. **SOMETIMES WE TAKE A MAGNIFYING GLASS AND LOOK AT THEM NOT TOSSING THEM ASIDE. WE**

HOLD ONTO THEM AND KEEP THEM IN OUR HEARTS. WE WON'T TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT WHAT THEY DID AND FORGIVE, NO WE KEEP IT IN OUR HEART. *THEN BIGGER HURTS OCCUR AND WE JUST KEEP THEM IN OUR HEART AND SOUL. WE GET THEM OUT FROM TIME TO TIME,* BUT PAUL TOLD US IN I CORINTHIANS 13:5 THAT *"Love keeps no record of wrongs"*. **WHEN WE KEEP ALL THESE WRONGS AND HURTS CLOSE TO OUR HEART WE CAN'T REACH OUT TO OTHERS AND IT AFFECTS ALL AREAS OF OUR LIVES. IT BECOMES LIKE A POISON.** REMEMBER EPHESIANS 4:31-32 *"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, **forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**"*

YOU REALLY BEGIN TO SEE FROM THESE VERSES THAT IT IS ABOUT YOU, NOT THE OTHER PERSON, BUT YOU. IT IS ABOUT LETTING GO!!! THERE IS A HELPFUL ACRONYM " R - A - P ".

R, MEANS REMEMBER ALL OF OUR OWN SHORTCOMINGS.

A, MEANS ASSUME THE BEST, NOT THE WORST. WE ASSUME A MOTIVE THAT MAY NOT THERE AT ALL. WHY THEY DID IT AND IT WASN'T.

P - PRAY, PRAY FOR YOUR ENEMIES.

WE DO GOOD, REMEMBER THE LORD'S PRAYER RIGHT? **ONE BY ONE WE LET GO OF THOSE HURTS AND FORGIVE UNTIL (DROP BACKPACK) OUR HEART AND SOUL ARE EMPTY OF THEM. FREE**

NOW WE REALIZE THAT BY LETTING GO OF ALL THOSE HURTS AND FORGIVING **WE ARE FREE TO LOVE AND HELP OTHERS!!!!** WE SHOULD BY EXAMPLE BE BEST AT IT IN THIS BODY OF CHRIST. I HAVE BEEN TOLD STORIES OF PEOPLE NOT FORGIVING BECAUSE OF BEING HURT AND THEY HAVE CARRIED THAT HURT FOR YEARS. WE MUST, IF WE ARE GOING TO MOVE FORWARD LET GO!!! **IT IS CLEAR IF WE ARE TO BE FORGIVEN THEN WE MUST FORGIVE.**

WE SAY IT EVERY WEEK IN THE WORDS OF THE LORD'S PRAYER. DO YOU BELIEVE IT AND MORE IMPORTANTLY DO YOU LIVE IT? AMEN.