


THE ART OF LIVING THE FORGIVEN LIFE

(PART 2)

For us to hate those who are in error, or talk of them with contempt or wish them ill, or do them wrong, is not according to the Spirit of Christ. You cannot cast out Satan by Satan, nor correct error by violence, nor overcome hate by hate. The conquering weapon of the Christian is love..

Charles Spurgeon

 reformeddevotionals

In Luke 23:34 From The Cross Jesus Cried:

‘Father Forgive Them They have No Idea What They Are Doing’.

The truth is that this statement was for all those who were killing Jesus and for us today too and is a reality. However many believers do not know, have no knowledge of what God’s Forgiveness means particularly when it comes to forgiving ourself. So let us ponder this

PAUL'S ILLUSTRATION

Paul, in various aspects, set an illustration of forgiving oneself. He had been a violent tormentor of the church. But rather than live in shame, guilt, and regret over what he'd done, or believe that God could not use him, or continually remind himself of his sin, he spread the Gospel through most of the Greek Speaking World. This was not from contrition or trying to make up for his past. More Accurately, it was out of an acknowledging grasp of God's great salvation found in Jesus. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 1:15–17:

“Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in Him and receive eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen”.

Paul's sin actually became an avenue by which God was glorified. Rather than refuse to forgive himself, Paul readily received God's forgiveness and rejoiced in it.

In Romans chapters 7—8 we see one more example of this. Paul laments his constant struggle with his sin nature, a battle common to every believer in Christ (The Flesh Vs The Spirit). But he doesn't say he'll just attempt with more intensity and emotional pressure to overcome, or that he'll never forgive himself. Rather, he says in Romans 7:24-8:2:

“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin. Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death”

FORGIVING OURSELF

As we cannot save ourselves from our Sin and believe me many still think they can. They think that they had a partnership with Jesus and His Finished Work and that is now what is required. But think how that is. Jesus died once for all. It was an act He faced on His own. There really is no way we can partner in the Cross. What an act of filthy Self Righteousness for us to think so. For if we try, it means that we are unaware of what Jesus did on the Cross and that we do not know Him (John 8: 32 & 14: 17; 1 John 2: 4 and 4: 6;). If we try to attain our own salvation through our own works (actions we do ourselves), this becomes what is referred to as self-righteousness (Ezekiel 33: 13; Romans 3: 22 & 4: 1-12; Corinthians 3: 5; Galatians 6: 14 -15; Hebrews 1: 3 & 10: 17-18). As Isaiah said this is nothing more than a filthy menstrual rag to God (Isaiah 64:6) and makes Him throw up. Self-Righteousness makes God in Jesus gag (Revelation 3:15-16). The King James Version Uses the word 'Spit' as in spit out a nasty after taste. But the actual Greek word is more to do with actually throwing up and the action that involves. But God is Spirit you say, He has no reflux action. No The Father does not true but The Son is now in human form and He does. To Act Self Righteous makes Jesus throw Up and this leaves a nasty after taste in His mouth.

To be Self Righteous can make us just like the Pharisees and we only need to read the Gospels to see how Jesus looked on their dead actions and stated who their true father was (John 8: 44). Jesus was not tormenting them but was using hard violent psychological blows so that through their shock they would turn to Him and the truth. But this was to no avail. Satan's job is to Kill, Steal and Destroy (John 10: 10). If you work out of those works that are now dead to us then note dead is dead: the old you has left this mortal coil, ceased to exist, and is no more. I cannot put it clearer than that 'Pythonesque' phrase. Dead actions equal no true relationship. But Jesus hangs on waiting for you. He did 2000 years ago on that glorious Cross of Life (John 10: 10). It is our Spirit that has been made that New Creation (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15)

In the same way when we harbour in our hearts and minds unforgiveness we open ourselves to Sin. Jesus forgave His enemies and did the work that the father sent Him to do (John 5:30, 6:37 & 17:21). He did the act of forgiving and just like anything to do with Faith it is we that have to accept that forgiveness is the choice we make to hold onto the baggage of fear and anger and even hate, or let it go (John 20:19-23). I shall explain about that later

What we had, before the Cross, and before we were 'Born from Above/' 'Again', was a relationship problem with God. It was sin that got in the way before the Cross. (John 17: 23-26; Romans chapter 7; Galatians 3: 22; Hebrews 12: 1; 1 Peter 4: 1; 1 John 1: 7 -in the spirit-1 John 1: 8 -in the flesh-; 1 John 2: 1 John 5: 16- 17).

GOD GOT RID OF THE OBSTRUCTION

This was a profoundly planned urgent operation involving 'The Cross' that had been well conceived from the 'Foundation of The World' (John 17: 24; Hebrews 4: 3 & 9: 26; 1 Peter 1: 20; Revelation 13: 18). God always had it planned that way. I do not know all the why and wherefores but there was never ever a plan 'B'.

New Life was to be ours through 'Jesus' Death and Resurrection', (John 10: 10; John 14: 6; 2 Corinthians 3: 6), which is 'Now' a reality for all humanity after this Cross Event. A blue print planned and executed (in the real sense of the word) with absolute precision and with the will (of God) to do it. Forgiveness was offered and if accepted on these new terms would build a Church and decree a New Covenant.

Jesus Himself stated that no one can come to God but through Him. To think a lack of forgiveness damns you to eternal torment is at its most simplest silly think about. Jesus came to save us and in Him we have eternal life (John 3:15-17). Yet if we are unforgiving we doom ourselves does that make sense: John 14:6:

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

When People asked Paul in Acts 16: 30-31 what they 'MUST DO TO BE SAVED' they answered this way.

‘And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.’

Was forgiveness hidden in the contract. Was the fact we had to forgive part of the small print.

Jesus said we are sanctified ,that is made holy by His truth (John 17:17:19). Was there to be an action or a work of ‘Forgiveness’ (for that was what it was under the Old Testament way it was an action. They had to forgive, take the action of forgiveness before it was given. It was that had to take place.

HOW DO WE DO FORGIVENESS?

So when some folks asked Jesus what works must they do to be saved Jesus had the answer that was a complete surprise: John 6: 28-29:

Then said they unto him

‘What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?’

Jesus answered and said unto them:

‘This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.’

No lists of do’s and don’ts but a simple phrase: This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.’ The truth is that when we come to Christ we start to get those things of truth and Love and holiness. Jesus became the Holy One. He was the right one. Anything we gain we *gain* because of Him. This includes forgiveness. We take the step towards His forgiveness and God through Christ in The Holy Spirit does the rest. John 17: 19 & 20 state:

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth... And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

Through His truth Not our acts of forgiveness. Start living the forgiven life and let the truth of it free you: John 8:32

‘And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’

So learn the truth about forgiveness.

From the Cross Jesus asked the Father Forgive them (US too):

Then said Jesus in Luke 23:34:

Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment and cast lots.

We really need to understand that God, in His heart, has already forgiven us. Do we? God has forgiven us whether we believe it or not, whether we understand it or not, even whether we want and desire it or not. His forgiveness, His (gift of forgiveness) does not depend upon our being good enough, and it does not depend on our repentance or confession or even upon us

feeling like we are lousy sinners. He persists in His Love for us, to present us His eternal blessing to us.

He wants to increase your understanding so you will realize the depth of His acceptance and Love for you. In this too we need to pray intelligently when you ask for forgiveness. Don't pray for God to forgive you because He already has. People pray "Oh Lord Please, please ; please forgive me." They beg and plead and promise: "Dear God, if You'll really forgive me, I won't do it again." Of course an empty promise and an empty prayer. The reality is that they think of and look for a change in God. "God, please will You [stop being angry at me and] forgive me?" We Don't have to do that—He already has forgiven us. So Don't plead for forgiveness to happen; it happened long ago just as our healing, deliverance, prosperity, and wholeness did.

There was an Old Testament Model (now obsolete) and Now there is a New Testament Model. But let's expand on that. In the Old Testament among other things A person was to:

- **Acknowledge and recognize their sin.**
- **Confess their sinful actions or inactions (their wrong doing).**
- **Ask for forgiveness of God and also them that have been harmed by that person (This was done through the offer of restitution in one way or another).**
- **Then to be repentant a total mental and emotional change was required**

One scripture that is used today by many is 2 Chronicles 7:12-14 and see how this fits in. Particularly 2 Chronicles 7:14:

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

This verse is one of many that has that process in play. It is in this context that a person needs to consider the process of forgiveness. This is an important key for without repentance a victim had no idea whether the wrongdoer was sorry or not. When there was no repentance, the victim was still left feeling wronged. So when those who have done wrong did repent, it needed to be sincere and it needed to be seen as such (for the lack of that spiritual dimension that man lost at the 'Fall').

Their thoughts and actions needed to be for the welfare of the people damaged, and not of themselves. Now the Church as a whole should be able to get that all that was Old Covenant and it is not the requirement now. The heart (our inner self, right down to the deepest level) still needs to change and the move forward and yes, this still needs to be genuine but a new process has been put into place with the return of a solid relationship with God and hence a spiritual connection that those in the Old Testament never had (at least to the intensity that we do now).

NEW TESTAMENT FORGIVENESS

Now we come to the New Testament and how forgiveness works in this Covenant. Note that here the believers responsibility is for themselves and their own relationship with God and learning to deal with that in honesty and openness. Spiritual connection is not made by a Christian's judgement in the other person's ability to accept forgiveness or whether we have to treat them sadly and badly until they come to Christ (that is nothing more than cultic retribution: 'I Forgive you but cannot accept you' is not forgiveness). Forgiveness is like righteousness, joy, faith, hope, and Love. It is there for us already as our work as is labour into rest through faith (Matthew 11:28) all we have to believe is to accept it. The truth is that this is now about our own response to God. What follows is as much about forgiving ourselves as well as others.

If God still holds sin against us then is that a relationship of an unforgiving God?

We know for most people that when acts cause division then unforgiveness creeps in. Statements like 'You are not my son anymore' or 'I do not want you as a mother any longer' are said and many times acts out of anger and reactionism follow in haste and so unforgiveness can take hold. But above and in all God is never will He say 'Depart from me I do not know you for us who are now in that relationship with Him (Psalm 119:15 & 139:19; Jeremiah 32:40; Matthew 7:23 & 25: 41). He has a relationship with us and that is a done deal and is sealed shut (2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13). Never will He leave us or depart from us (Hebrews 13:5). When we imagine His kind of forgiveness, it shows us God's Loving-kindness, His Mercy, and Munificence (Big, Big Benevolence) . When God says that He forgives us ALL, Everyone then there are no exceptions (not even those who come against us).

Love is the answer. Love is the way. We know that, even deep down we know that. The more you pray (worship and speak to God) and get into the scriptures and Get that Living Word you get that. The relationship strengthens and you just know and have more revealed. So how much do we know that we are Forgiven. It is in this that we know then how much we are Loved. For when we get to see how much we are forgiven we appreciate the great act of Love that God poured out on us. If we do not get it then we are limited in how we respond. Forgiveness opens us up to Love the way God intended. For as Jesus Himself said in Luke 7: 47 (b)

'... but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

Each of us are a Child of God; God has washed us whiter than snow! He did not leave behind even the smallest blemish. His forgiveness is total and complete. So therefore is His Forgiveness. Mercy incorporates forgiveness and Love incorporates Mercy.

Do we understand this?

Do we believe this?

If we do, then we need to let go of any guilt that we may feel from past sins any baggage that drags us down and that will grind and bring us to deep dark places.

So how can we get to this place of forgiveness?

We must always look to Jesus and see the amazing grace of his forgiveness and know that it is now He who has sat down in glory (Hebrews 12:2) . Look to the Cross (John 19), Look to the fact He now mediates with the Father (Romans 8).

A SHADOW IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

It boils down to this, and you have to get this because when you do it will free you to love anyone anywhere. Take it in and reflect on this: See it in your mind. I will not rush this. God forgives You; He Forgives me and when we get even a shadow of that lives our changed (and not just ours). There are many types, analogies, and shadows in the Old Testament. Just take 2 Samuel 12:13

Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.” And Nathan said to David, “The Lord also has taken away your sin; you shall not die.

UNFORGIVENESS CAN LEADS TO ILLNESS

Unforgiveness is Debilitating. It cripples us and it saps us of strength and vigour. Forgiving oneself is simply letting go of what we are carrying and the baggage of burdens that brings us down, haunts us, and disables us in so many ways even to the point of allowing in various illnesses with things like:

- **Mental illness (Stress, depression, phobias, victimisation, and anxiety for example can be a part of this)**
- **Physical Illness (Asthma, Joint Pain, Headaches can be a sign of this)**
- **Emotional turmoil (such as extreme fear of authority, or some forms of arrogance – as perceived that are defence mechanisms and outbursts of anger).**

But there is a way we can fight against all this. Paul states in Philippians 4:8-9 states:

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Hebrews 3: 5-8 tells us that to trust the Lord is the way to go and it is He that brings us health:

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.

This tells us that we are to put into practice those things that we have understood from God and from His Word. To maintain and practice (in our thoughts) the events of our sin, self-loathing and pity as we go back and back again is not what Philippians 4:8-9 tells us. We are told explicitly to dwell on whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable. Not to dwell on what is a lie, unclean, unholy, ugly, and shameful. If we go down the latter root then shame and guilt rule our hearts and God is nowhere to be seen and the Cross irrelevant.

Of course in the natural man there are ways we think are right but where does that lead us It may have been Solomon who wrote in Proverbs 16:25:

"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."

The energy it takes to entertain anger, hatred, shame, guilt, and resentment towards yourself is exhaustive it wears you down and it wears you out. Every bit of energy we give to destructive events and dwelling on regrets, misgiving, disappointment, and disillusionment, robs us of the power we need to become the person God wants us to be. Hebrews 12:13-17 (Good News Bible) makes this all too clear:

Keep walking on straight paths, so that the lame foot may not be disabled, but instead be healed. Try to be at peace with everyone, and try to live a holy life, because no one will see the Lord without it. Guard against turning back from the grace of God. Let no one become like a bitter plant that grows up and causes many troubles with its poison. Let no one become immoral or unspiritual like Esau, who for a single meal sold his rights as the older son. Afterward, you know, he wanted to receive his father's blessing; but he was turned back, because he could not find any way to change what he had done, even though in tears he looked for it.

We had no part to play in God's forgiveness other than we were the forgiven. The Cross was not an event that Jesus did in partnership with us. Jesus took it on alone and obtains God's Forgiveness and reconciliation. We just have to accept that.

Life has missteps and mistakes and sometimes there seems to be so many, and we get angry at our wrong choices. Every choice we make will either take us in a positive, direction or a negative one robbing us of an opportunity and as this happens we can grieve and regret it for a time. But not dwell on it so much so it takes up our whole lives.

Forgiveness is a choice that takes courage and grit, and it gives us the opening to become someone who lives in victory rather than defeat it opens us up to realise that we are more than conquerors rather than remaining a victim of our own scorn: Romans 8 37:

'Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.'

Both Forgiveness and Unforgiveness have consequences in this World.

UNFORGIVENESS IS A FORM OF PRIDE & SELF RELIANCE

If we do not forgive ourselves of past sins, it is in fact a form of pride. Whenever we enact a different set of self-governing rules, and so create a higher set of ethics and ideals for ourselves over others, that is pride, and whether we like it or not we have let the standard of The Law in.

When we find it inside ourselves to forgive others, but not ourselves, we are stating that we are more able to make poor decisions than others are. We are somehow more instinctual, knowledgeable, more perceptive, more cautious than others, and therefore, we are without excuse and should not forgive ourselves because we have let down the side and do not hold to the standard that we set. This is nothing more than punishing ourselves into submission and allowing ourselves to become a victim. When we reject the forgiveness stretched out to us to us by God's open hands on the Cross, and of others too, when will not forgive ourselves then what we are doing is setting ourselves above others (not below them as when we have a pity party we can also make ourselves the centre of attention) and that is why it is pride! Proverbs 16:18 says,

"Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

Unforgiveness is constantly looking for us to depend on our own protection and so not open ourselves up to be loved by God (on our part not His) and indeed love Him back. This will bring about self-destruction, a haughty spirit, and a fall. Mentally emotionally and physically.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE TO NOT ACCEPT UNFORGIVENESS

What have we done that makes us such a person that is unforgiven? Have you murdered someone in anger, Moses did, or allowed religious persecution that led to murder; we know Paul did. Have you hid your marriage from someone because of the fear of what you think they will do to you if they found out and thus open your spouse to adultery. Abraham did twice. Have you committed adultery; we know David did. Have you denied Jesus not once but three times Peter did.

However and here is where I stick in my big but. We are also to be so minded of others that we may be called to seek them out or beg pardon of them in humility. It's continually imperative to seek the forgiveness, for this is part of that model too for those we've hurt, and it is the key to balance when it comes to forgiving ourselves even if it is hard to do. Jesus said in Matthew 5:23-24, that if

"...your brother or sister has something against you ... First go and be reconciled to them"

After all we are called to reconciliation where we can. We may have to humble ourselves and beg pardon. The people that you may be called to go for their forgiveness may not forgive you, of course; they may refuse your approach or react with anger over what you did, but then it becomes their problem, not yours. You will have done everything you could to let

them know you regret what happened, and that you want their forgiveness. If it is impossible to do because that person is not around anymore, then I suggest you write a letter put it in an envelope, reflect on it and then burn it, it is done (this has helped me). However you cannot always seek Reconciliation. Colossians 3:13 tells us to:

“Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone”

FORGIVENESS MAY NOT HOWEVER MEAN RECONCILIATION

Does forgiveness mean reconciliation?

The answer is No.

The reason is because forgiveness and reconciliation are two distinct Biblical aspects. It is great when relationships can be reconciled. However, that is not always possible or even safe for that matter. Reconciliation by the nature of God is about re-establishing relationships. It may be possible to forgive a perpetrator who harmed you or a family member or close friend, but a relationship may never be possible. For reconciliation to work there has to be an on-going relationship between the two parties.

For instance, a parent may forgive the person who killed their child in a drunk driving accident, in which the driver was killed too or is never found (or any other reasons). Therefore it is unlikely they will pursue a friendship with that driver. The reason a person needs to forgive is because the pain and anger will eat them alive and weigh them down. But this may never mean you have contact with that person you have forgiven ever again.

Therefore as Reconciliation involves relationship this then means that we are willing to acknowledge the offending person as a brother or sister in Christ or a friend and again commune with them in the church, or even outside it. It also means that you are receptive to re-establishing trust with them again (where possible- there may be reasons you never trust them again). However it may be over time if and as they resume to walk faithfully in Christ, it may happen. Neither does it automatically mean that you will accept them as a close friend, or that they should be restored to their previous relationship with you. Christian reconciliation does not instantly imply that all trust is restored. It means that you receive them as a brother or sister in Christ. Trust will take time (or may never happen again).

Remember we are looking at forgiving ourselves. The relevance of this therefore is to make sure that we understand forgiveness and so understand the Love of God. When we are free to forgive and be open then we are free to Love and Forgive and thus are more open to God's will.

The Bible does require us to forgive those who have harmed us, and it requires us to reconcile as brothers and sisters in Christ, if the sinning party repents. But the Bible does not tell us to trust people, and receive them into close companionship, if they have utterly destroyed our trust. We must love them (Matt 5:44), but we are not required to trust them (Jn 2:24).

Christians need to be very cautious not to pressure people to be reconciled to each other through rules and regulations. Too often, Christians are keen to see relationships restored. And while a restored relationship might be a wonderful thing, it may also be a terrible thing if it is only looked at on the surface. Christians shouldn't pressure other Christians to reconcile when reconciliation is not the right thing to do at that time and should not make people go against their peace. But a call to forgiveness under Christ will retain and renew that peace in us and help us understand the Love Of God more.

Jesus is the one who has truly reconciled us: Ephesians 2:16 says:

And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

And Colossians 1:20

And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

THE PEACE OF FORGIVENESS & NOT BEING A DOORMAT

Christian forgiveness will bring peace. Forgiving yourself is also important for stability and living that purpose driven life under God. This is an ongoing thing and has to walk hand in hand with how we forgive others. Love and compassion, by their very nature, ask us to reach out to others, whereas unforgiveness says 'I can do that when I get over this' or 'who am I to help others in love when I cannot even help myself'. This is all fluff and bluster and is pride that we put in the way of truth. Get it 'It is not about You; It Is About Jesus.

Unforgiveness hurts us but it can also hurt the way that we interact with others. The longer we dodge forgiving ourselves we will not be open to God, the longer we permit ourselves to harbour the emotions that we are deserving to suffer for what we did, and that this is from God to keep us humble, then this actually can make us either more explosive or we will become shut down and a doormat for all in sundry and, therefore, the more apt you are to hurt others by reacting negatively in temper or you let others take advantage to the detriment of yourself. Unforgiveness shows itself.

A doormat is a tiny rug placed just within a doorway where people can wipe their soiled shoes before move into the rest of the house. The term doormat is also used figuratively to refer to people who permit themselves to be (symbolically) walked on by others; that is, a doormat allows himself or herself to be mistreated, mocked, or taken advantage of without a defence.

Since it seems Jesus taught us to "turn the other cheek" (Matthew 5:39) and to "do good to those who hate you" (Luke 6:27), many believe that this was what Jesus was teaching us to be.

Jesus was not instructing His disciples on how to be doormats. More Accurately, He was teaching that, to venerate God and show ourselves to be His children, we need to as compliant as possible for the sake of a lost world. To “turn the other cheek” does not mean we place ourselves or others in danger or that we ignore injustice. But it does mean that if it will turn others to Christ we accept it. When we are the victims of personal slurs or misery (“slaps on the cheek”), our first reaction is not to give into retaliation. Being a doormat is weakness, but choosing forgiveness is strength. Proverbs 19:11 (English Standard Version) states:

Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.

While we tend to concentrate and so focus on what we see, God is always seeing the heart (Jeremiah 17:10; John 2:25; 1 Samuel 16:7). Commands such as “do good to those who hate you” are aimed the hearts of His disciples (You & Me). Jesus wants His love to be our prime inspiration for all we do (1 Corinthians 16:14; 1 Thessalonians 3:12). If we’re attempting to do good to our enemies and so let feelings dictate by our own strength and power, we are allowing vengeance or bitterness to take root in our hearts. But when we are open to the Truth of His Love and Forgiveness this will not be the case (Hebrews 12:15). God knows that our external actions may not automatically reflect our inward motivations, and it is those inner rationales that are most essential to Him.

It may appear virtuous and Christlike when someone lets themselves be used as a doormat, but there could also be a egotistical reasons behind it. For example, some folks allow themselves to be doormats because of their own timidities and low self-worth. They fear rejection, so they accept and thus allow their own boundaries to be breached by others in hopes they will be welcomed and understood and indeed loved. They are trying to gain confirmation by obtaining it with their acquiescence, in effect, believing fallible individuals will say who they are as a substitute of trusting God to do that. This seldom succeeds, and the doormat feels worse after that and guilt and shame take hold.

A Christian can escape being a doormat by first knowing his or her true worth in Christ. Every human being is created in the image of God, to reveal His glory and magnificence in exceptional ways (Genesis 1:27; 1 Corinthians 10:31). Meaningless superficial, dynamics have no impact on one’s value to God. If God does not now calculate our substandard qualities against us, then we shouldn’t, either (Romans 8:31).

Understanding that God has declared us righteous because of Jesus’ death and resurrection (2 Corinthians 5:21) should enable us to live in the freedom that it brings. We are no one’s doormats; we are sons and daughters of the Most High God (Philippians 2:14–15; Ephesians 5:1).

When a Christian practices being “crucified with Christ” (Galatians 2:20), the emphasis swings from the self to the Lord. Jesus, the authentic Servant of All, was not a doormat. He served freely but never permitted people to take from Him what He was not prepared to give. At one point, a mob attempted to hurl Him over a precipice of a cliff (Luke 4:29). Another time, they planned to make Him king (John 6:15). Since neither was God’s plan for Him, Jesus simply slipped away. He declined to be their doormat.

Christians can seek out sensible advice about boundary-setting. Healthy borders make for healthy relationships. We need to learn that allowing the sins or thoughtless behaviour of others is not loving them and sets a pattern; it is tolerance at best. Selfish anxiety, rooted in a need for others to love, welcome, or need us, pushes us to free those who should experience their own consequences. When asked to infringe upon a boundary, an otherwise passive person can be emboldened to take the right stand with a polite “no.”

God loves us, but He is not afraid to say “no” when He needs to. Doormats are generally people who are afraid to say “no” when they need to. Or like me people that are afraid of what they might do if those boundaries become too personal. Acknowledging why we are anxious or fearful can be a big step in overcoming that handicap.

LOVE AS JESUS LOVES (THAT INCLUDES YOURSELF)

The reality is that you cannot alter what has happened in the past. You cannot re-establish lives to where they were before the incident. However, you can make a change in the lives of others. You can give back what you have taken away by finding a different place to invest your time and movement towards compassion.

‘Love your neighbour as yourself’, and ‘Love one another as I have loved You’, is a statement that shows us that to Love as God Loves is to live in forgiveness because God Loves us as Forgiven. That true that simple:

John 15:9 and 16:27:

As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love... For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.

Love incorporates forgiveness, Mercy in the Old Testament incorporates Forgiveness. Peace Incorporates forgiveness.

WHEN WE FORGIVE WE CAN KNOW GOD’S FORGIVENESS

Forgiving oneself, at the end of the day, comes from recognizing God’s forgiveness. The Bible is clear that every single human has sinned against God (Romans 3:23), and that all our wrongdoing was against God (Psalm 51:4; Genesis 39:9). Thus, the important factor we need is God’s forgiveness, which is accessible to us through the person and finished work of Jesus Christ. All who put their faith in Jesus are completely forgiven of their sins (unforgiveness is a sin). They are counted as righteous before God, eternally justified (Romans 5:1–11; Ephesians 1:13–14; 2:1–10). We do, of course, still struggle with sin through habit. Jesus’ sacrifice was sufficient for all our sins. Forgiving yourself, then, really has to do with accepting God’s forgiveness that has already been offered.

Our sins do have real and often heart-breaking outcomes in our lives. But God is faithful bring us through that for His glory and our good (Romans 8:28–30; 2 Corinthians 1:3–7). He is not the cause, however. We are not left to flounder in the effects of our sins. Instead, God helps us stand through them, and we can see His redemptive capabilities (James 1:2–5).

Forgiving yourself can be particularly problematic when your sin has had a negative impact on others. We have discovered that where we can it is possible to seek forgiveness from those we have aggrieved. Again I say where possible. Again, God is the one who facilitates this reconciliation because of His Finished work on the Cross. Living in shame will not repair a broken connection in relationships or eliminate the damage that you have done. But the truth of the Gospel will.

REGRETS & REMINDERS

Reminders of previous sins can be used as triggers to actually praise God for His mercy rather than to get angry and grieve past sins long dead (Hebrews chapter 10). Existing adverse consequences from our past sin can be reminders of God's fidelity and consistency to His Beloved. They can be prompts to prayer and reliance on God for patience, liberation, and transformation. Forgiving yourself is essentially just accepting God's forgiveness in its fullness. In that, there is much freedom (Galatians 5:1)!

While this might be simple to comprehend in concept, forgiving yourself can be difficult in practice. We regret our bad choices, and we are contrite over the ways they have hurt ourselves and others. The enemy continues to accuse us and remind us of our sins. Others in our lives might do the same. There are even occasions we might even think it is repentant or laudable to refuse to forgive ourselves, we deserve all we get, as if our punishment of ourselves will atone for our sins. Even though we know different. In fact this is a form of Cognitive Dissonance (This is the state of having inconsistent thoughts, beliefs, actions, or attitudes, especially as relating to behavioural decisions and attitude changes. What we believe is not questioned though it goes against all else we adhere to and that individuals are uncomfortable if their beliefs are at variance with their behaviour) .

But this line of thought and behaviour is not the message that the Gospel of Christ reveals to us . In truth, the Bible is quite clear that we could not ever atone for our own sins. We were sinners who are now dead in transgression (Romans 3:23; 6:23; Ephesians 2:1–10) and inept apart from Christ (John 3:16–18, 36; Romans 5:6–8). The Gospel informs us that God's wrath for our sins has been poured out on Jesus; justice has been served. We must therefore acknowledge that living in guilt or punishment is a rejection of the truth of the Gospel.

IT IS NOT ABOUT FORGIVING OURSELF FIRST

All through the stages that we have to go through to forgive ourselves it does not mean we do not continue to forgive others, in fact, it is often quite ironic that those who cannot forgive themselves may have no problems with forgiving others. However this can be problematic too. Once we can forgive others and get into the habit of forgiveness then we are really free and open to God's will. Once we understand that our forgiveness is not based on how we forgive but on how God has forgiven us we can be set free.

THE EXAMPLES OF JESUS & STEPHEN

In Luke 23:34 (NIV) Jesus says,

“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”

Jesus the Son of God, the man sent by God to be an exemplar to humanity, was on the cross, at the point of death and offered there and then the New Testament way of forgiveness.

In Acts 6:3 we read of Stephen who was a man full of grace and compassion. He was called to be a servant (A minister) and to distribute the food equally to the Greek and Hebrew widows. In Acts 7:59-60 (about three to five years later) Stephen who is now evangelising as part of his duties and is being stoned to death:

“And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”

In Jesus and Stephen (and looking purely at their humanity), these were men who had a close relationship with God (Jesus in who He was and Stephen because of who He knew He was in Christ and knew the extent of God's Forgiveness).

TO GET FORGIVENESS & KNOW HOW IT WORKS

When we get God's forgiveness we get how forgiveness works for us and so can offer it to others. Ephesians 4: 31-32 says

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

When you desire and have mercy and forgiveness from God and start to get it and know you have His Love, and His Righteousness you make sure you are not embittered, filled with rage or anger against another person almost by accident because you realise that these are the things that can block you from God's Love. This can happen as I am proof of that. With all that have hurt me I could have become a victim both giving up and giving in to that hate and fear that unforgiveness brings.

On this foundation also many would ask how can the church ask a broken person to forgive in the same way that Jesus did? Is it not more compassionate to understand what a person needs and adjust forgiveness to fit in with how that person can deal with it and to thus be given an opportunity to grow toward this ideal and let them move from the Old Testament model to the New Testament one. Yes of course you meet people where they are at But you do not introduce them to the Old Testament way of Forgiveness. Spiritually for the New Christian the immature child of Christ this is Psycho-Spiritual 'Child Abuse'.

Many Christian people say that they desperately want "to be like Jesus" without the true knowledge of having that living Spirit of Jesus, of God inside them. Galatians 2: 20 states that when we are born again Christ lives in us, the flesh and ego are killed off. We have to get to the point where we believe this. There seems to be a lack of will to grasp what God says through ardent study and prayer. These things are dead to us it is the habits that the old life forms that have us hanging on often.

THE TRUE HEART OF FORGIVENESS (ROMANS 12:14-21)

The greatest thing we can do when we ought to forgive someone is pray for them, make the decision to forgive and "let it go." That means you stop thinking and repeating and talking about what they did, stop rehearsing it over and over again in your mind. The faster you determine to let offenses go, the easier it will become and because we cannot forgive someone each day; however, if there is a hurt that has been in your heart for a long time, it may take some time for you to get totally free of it. But you can do it—by God's grace—if you won't give up!

Paul talks about burning coals falling on people's heads. This is not about hell and damnation as some believe (so many Christians have got to stop loving that feeling of angry warmth). That is not from God .

What the end of Romans twelve is about is forgiveness and that is so much so that you want these enemies 'Born Again' and Baptised in The Holy Spirit' so that they can become fellow ministers with you in the Kingdom building business that God has set before His family. Romans 12: 2 is where we are told to renew our minds (see last section on how we can start to do this). Romans 12 is the same chapter where we see how this works when it comes to salvation and with forgiveness implied. Romans 12: 14-21 states:

Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil but overcome evil with good.

To bless is to also speak well of a person. So we are asked to speak well of a person and bless them, that is to pray blessings. So we are to bless and not curse those who persecute and hurt us.

We are called to cry and rejoice accordingly with those that are in grief and are rejoicing, this is about compassion and sharing in these things. When it comes to weeping it is to wail aloud, take action and be there in the empty dark place. So we are called to compassion.

We are called to use the Gift of Wisdom of God and let Him guide us and not just be mindful in earthly things.

We are called to not let our ego's get in the way. To mind not high things here means not to seek power riches or fame. Not to put yourself front and centre (because then you open yourself up to unforgiveness).

We are called to submission to God to be carried away by Him, not the Me, Myself I of Ego. Be there for everyone no matter who they are and what position in society they hold (as scripture also says God is not a respecter of persons, meaning He does not care how high or low we are all are the same to Him in Jesus)

We are not to pay back evil for evil. Just because we get hurt or offended does not mean that we have the right for revenge. Grace does not accept an eye for an eye but instead the giving of an eye metaphorically or a hand that would lead to a heart of compassion. To go against God's heart would lead us to go against God's will.

We are to live in peace with all men but that is based on how our inner life is. But that is a starting point. Remember what Jesus said in John Chapter Twenty. It is we that carry things around with us and it is we that can choose peace. Note here that Paul states in Romans 12:18: that it is

'as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men'.

As much that is in you. Do what you can. Here there is always room for renewal of the mind and growth in knowledge.

Paul then in Romans twelve verse nineteen says that we are not to take revenge. But then it seems he is saying give yourself over to anger and wrath. It is much more than that and not that at all. Here Paul is saying in the Greek to get excited and give yourself over to the desire of strong emotion. But if that was the case and it was just about wrath then think about it. Jesus forgiving us would not have been possible. Because we too would have to be revenged. The Cross did that for the person who we see as enemy too. Thus a quote from the OLD TESTAMENT. It is from Deuteronomy 32:35-36:

To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste. For the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left...

(Also see Psalm 94:1; Isaiah 5:19 & 63:4; Ezekiel 25:14; Nahum 1: 2 & 6; Hebrews 10:30).

GOD'S VENGEANCE PUT ON JESUS

God has set any vengeance on Jesus. Vengeance has been dealt with. God wants all people saved. So why would He have us be wrathful. The Greek used for 'Wrath' here I can also mean have a strong emotional pull. Now this can be towards anger and is mostly used for this BUT it can also be used for a strong compunction towards compassion (Under the New Testament Grace what makes more sense. No here God is calling us to excitement because of our good actions in feeding and helping our enemies in need we give testimony leading to that glorious day we are born again and have the Holy Spirit poured on them. We need to envision it and see it and get it. For God wants all to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4).

Note tongues of fire could also be described as coals of fire as seen at Pentecost. Tongues is a description, as in coals White Hot and burning individual fire falling down from heaven, think about it. Here Paul says get excited for as you get to take an action of Love and Compassion you witness to the truth of who Jesus is and God's vengeance taken on the Cross and finished with those great words. 'Father Forgive Them..'.

Hebrew 10:23-31

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Hebrews 10 30 expresses a quote from the Old Testament, hence the 'Past Tense':

To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.

Thus verse 30 tells us that God's Vengeance was seen and acted out on the Cross: For Vengeance and Recompense (that is Restitution, Restoration) came in Jesus and that great Finished Work. Hebrews Chapter 10 Verse 31 can also be translated as:

'It inspires fear to fall into the hands (into His protective power) of the living God.'

What follows is the truth that we will have hardship and suffering but to be patient and yes we may have to endure. The Good News Bible says this of the last three verses of Hebrews 10:

For, as the scripture says, "Just a little while longer, and he who is coming will come; he will not delay. My righteous people, however, will believe and live; but if any of them

turns back, I will not be pleased with them." We are not people who turn back and are lost. Instead, we have faith and are saved.

That last word 'lost' again is inaccurate perdition is the word that the King James Bible uses ... Perdition, can be about loss of reward and destruction under Hell but it can also be about self destruction and going your own way here and now. But it is also a statement regarding those who have not yet come to God. It is a statement that we do not have to give up but to strive in faith so as to make sure they are saved. We are not about letting others draw back either as the old commentaries state again and again we are about the 'Regaining Of The Soul'.

To take vengeance now would be to deny the Cross and so not be doing God's will. Yes there are those who do not and will not accept Jesus But Vengeance is a done and dusted deal finished when Jesus said: 'It Is Finished' (John 19:30). That meant you and that meant everyone else even those that persecute you. Tough that isn't it?

It may take many attempts at renewing your mind towards forgiveness but the more you do it the more you become proficient at it. You can only replace the negative thoughts with scripture and truth if you know scripture and have adhered to the truth. Every day Pray and read.

Jesus gave His life so we can have relationship with God, not religion. I want to encourage you to choose a pure heart, free of unforgiveness, so you can have a personal, intimate relationship with God that will fill you with His joy and prepare you to fulfil His good plan for your life!

Do not confuse being angry at the spiritual forces with being angry at someone else. This is Righteous anger. Jesus got angry at these things too. These are such things as:

- **Satan,**
- **Sickness,**
- **Scarcity/lack**
- **Sin/ missing the mark**

We are involved in a spiritual battle. Remember this that Satan is the one who brings unbelief and the one who fights against the truth. He is a murderer and a destroyer and wants to steal all of God from us (John 10:10).

It takes practice and baby steps for many to walk in forgiveness. Just start taking those steps on the journey; that is where we all can rest (Lamentations 5: 5; Matthew 11: 28; Hebrews 4: 11). You have already taken the first step as a believer in 'Believing' and having 'Faith' (Same root word in the Greek). For as a believer you have Faith and belief in what Jesus did for you on the Cross (John 1: 12 & 17: 21; Acts 16: 30; Romans 10: 9). This includes forgiveness as a gift for you but for all others too.

WE MUST RENEW OUR MINDS

Our minds can clearly become confused without renewing and transforming them (Romans 12:2) . We tend to collect more and more junk. And as we do these form into habits taken from the life we lived before we died in Christ and were Born again (Galatians 2:20). We hold onto emotions and feelings.

But if we make it our intention to continually renew our minds, we can wipe out the debris that we've taken in. We can make our minds new and they can be transformed. This Renewing and so transforming our minds is centred on the knowledge that we gain through our faith walk and through this we can bring this to our everyday life.

How do we Renew our minds so as they are constantly directed towards God and The Forgiven Life?

Romans 12:2: Renewing The Mind:

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

F.F. Bruce the Theologian puts it like this:

'If the old ways are to be abandoned, renewal is called for, and this must be an inward renewal. The new life is not to be regulated by conformity to some external standard: its wellspring lies within, "in the spirit of your mind." So Paul exhorts the Roman Christians: "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (Rom. 12:2). This inward renewal is the work of the Holy Spirit, progressively transforming believers into the image of Christ, "from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor. 3:18).¹²⁵ It is by the Spirit's power, too, that "the inner being is being renewed every day," no matter to what attrition the body may be exposed (2 Cor. 4:16), until what is mortal is "swallowed up by life"—a consummation of which the Spirit is the present guarantee (2 Cor. 5:4-5).'

(F. F. Bruce. The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians. -Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 358. [commentary on Eph 4:23])

The following are taken from my notes so I apologise if I am quoting others or have not stated things as fully as I should. I use this to just demonstrate how we renew the Mind and thus transform it.

Caroline Leaf states:

'Science has shown that bad thoughts are toxic to our brains and to our health. We can replace toxic thoughts with good thoughts, but it takes time which requires our perseverance to get the job done. God designed us to think only positive thoughts. The Brain does not recognise negatives. We were designed to be Addicted to God. Thus Addiction is a 'Good Thing'. To not be addicted to God means then that you are Addicted to the Self and the other things that brings. Where your mind goes your brain follows.'

Ecclesiastes 7:29 tells us:

I have discovered only this: God made human beings for righteousness, but they seek many alternatives."

Good Positive Thoughts come as we listen to the Holy Spirit. Action leads to choice [consequences-S]. Mental Emotional Illnesses come from our Thought Life. All this problematic DNA and thinking go back to the 'Genetic Adam and Genetic Eve'. Genes Started Pure but through generations became impure and perverse. First mess in DNA passed down and so it went.... You cannot control the events and circumstances, but you can control you reactions to them. The truth starts in How To Renew/ Transform Our Minds...

What we think has an impact on our emotional, mental, and physical development. So if we stay in a negative zone we are a mess physically, emotionally, and mentally. 75% - 80% of illnesses research would suggest come from and out of our thought life.

The longer you keep all those toxic things inside then the more physically you are going to get physically and Mentally. Sin is voluntary but Trauma is involuntary. That is why forgiveness is essential. Quantum Laws include Entanglement (Quantum Entanglement). We are all connected. That is we are all connected and made by God (Relationship). Quantum Physics shows us that there is no space time dimension unlike classical physics. Thus God over space and time. Two quantum particles can be connected and thus when thrown apart they will spin towards each other.

When it comes to forgiveness we become victims because the situation, the cause, converted into a physical substance. Thus the memory of the issue is there. If we do not forgive then this memory is 'Toxic'. This can cause physical symptoms like inflammation of the brain, physical illness and stages 2 and 3 of stress etc. The more you think about it, it will grow. Thus when we stay in the God Zone our entanglement is there

And no matter how far we go- we always are drawn back and there is always a connection. Thoughts are physical in the 'Brain'. There are more than 300 scriptures in the Bible that show us that Thoughts Precede action. The root is the thoughts because without thoughts you cannot say or do. Thoughts are powerful and physical, But they can be changed. So we need Thoughts can be changed. 2 Corinthians 10:5 (ESV) states

We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ (2 Cor 10:5 ESV)

Dr Caroline Leaf gives compelling evidence that what scientists are discovering about how our brain works ties closely with God's word. It only makes sense that the designer of our brains designed them in such a way that they must conform to what scripture tells us about how we should use our minds and how we should deal with our thoughts. Deuteronomy 30:19 (ESV) says:

This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you, life and death, blessings, and curses. Now choose life [and thoughts that bring life], so that you and your children may live.

We need to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ because if we don't we let toxic thoughts into our mind which if done so repeated over time become long term memories in our physical brains. These toxic thoughts are also described as bad habits.

To work on the mind takes discipline and patience. It takes perseverance. It takes consistency. It takes the help of the Holy Spirit in us. We need Pray to our heavenly Father each day. His Holy Spirit will establish the discipline of taking captive every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Assess and review every thought by the truth of God's Word, and don't let your mind invite thoughts contrary to the will of God. Also be mindful of the many thoughts and kinds of thoughts which we ought to stop acknowledging and using in our day to day lives.

One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is self-control (Gal 5:22-23). Pray to your heavenly Father for the self-control and discipline to be able to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

The truths of who we are in Christ Jesus are the most essential thoughts to devote to memory and most Christians have not fully taken them to heart.. Read the scriptures regarding these things and pray each day as you can live this forgiven life and you will be amazed at how your life will become transformed.

CONCLUSION

Just remember that Forgiveness is about you, not about anyone else. If You are unforgiving it is you that carries the baggage no one else. The truth is If You do not Forgive you hurt yourself more than anyone else.

Who would have thought to it. Stay Free and Stay Forgiven and thank God that the only thing you have to do is make the choice to forgive through Jesus Finished Work as He said: 'Father Forgive Them They Know Not What They Do'. Well now we are starting to know so Thank God For Jesus.

Stay Safe and Live Blessed:

Shalom Soteria

Sean