

GROWING IN GRACE LETTERS! – Calling saints in Christ, (in our homes and with one another in Church), to walk in the Steps of Jesus! (1 Peter 2:15-25) Edited by James Bell, a servant of Jesus Christ!

5 5 26 V2n1 FORGIVEN & FORGIVING vs THE TORMENT OF NOT FORGIVING!

FOR YEARS ... I was a SLAVE to bitterness! MANY feel that FORGIVENESS is hard or impossible! Many saints in Christ loose battles by refusing to forgive IN THE SAME MANNER as Jesus has forgiven us. **REALITY:** At times our HURT not only lingers— it deepens, enslaves, and paralyzes! Why? — OFTEN it is because we refuse to forgive; we demand our expectations; and we refuse our God-given responsibilities!

What is the result of these choices? We are tormented! We chose to remain hurt. We may even magnify our hurt and embrace the role of being a victim. **We may ‘build an army’ of supporters** to feel sorry for us and to join us in demonizing the person or group who we hold responsible. HOWEVER, IF this is not stopped— our whole body and soul will be deeply INFECTED and we will infect others.

Multitudes are unnecessarily enslaved to resentments, bitterness, and deepening hurt because of FORGIVENESS FAILURES! **In life bad things are done to us. We do bad things. FORGIVENESS BREAKS THE BONDAGE FROM THESE BAD THINGS.**

(THE FOLLOWING is edited from an article from a number of years. I have kept it on my computer. It spells out DELIVERANCE and FREEDOM to all who receive and apply the Biblical truth!)

Healing the Hurt we did not Deserve!

2 Matthew 18:21-35 (Edited from Ray Pritchard)

QUOTE: “Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea until they have something to forgive!” There are two parts to that observation and both of them are important for us to think about:

I. Forgiveness is a Christian Virtue. Consider these words from the lips of our Lord: “Do not judge and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven” (Luke 6:37). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said it very plainly:

“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matthew 6:14-15).

The Apostle Paul said a very similar thing in Colossians 3:13: “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” **There is another way to say it, and it comes from the “Love Chapter”— I Corinthians 13.**

While describing the greatest virtue, Paul declared that **“love ... keeps no record of wrongs”** (I Corinthians 13:5).

“Love doesn’t keep score of the sins of others.” Love doesn’t keep score — it finds a way to forgive the sins of others. **MOST OF ALL**, we have the greatest, most profound statement on this topic in the entire Bible, the finest, purest, highest example of forgiveness.

When JESUS hung on the cross, condemned to death by evil men who plotted to murder him, who produced lying witnesses to convict him, as he surveyed the howling mob assembled to cheer his suffering, Jesus the Son of God, the One who knew no sin, in his dying moments uttered words that still ring across the centuries.

Luke 23:34: “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing”

Many of us think or say, “If only the people who hurt me would show some remorse, some sorrow, then maybe I could forgive them.” But since that rarely happens, we use that as an excuse to continue in our bitterness, our anger, and our desire to get even.

But consider Jesus on the cross. The crowd laughed, mocked, cheered, and jeered. Those who passed by hurled insults at him. They taunted him: “If you are the King of Israel, come down from the cross and save yourself.”

Let us be clear on this point— when he died, the people who put him to death were quite pleased with themselves. No one said, “I was wrong. This is a mistake. We were such fools.” And yet he said, “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.”

That is precisely what we must say if we are going to follow Jesus. We also must pray like this to God about people who hurt us deliberately and repeatedly. We must pray it to God about those who intentionally attack us. We must pray it to God about those who casually and thoughtlessly wound us. We must pray it to God about those closest to us, to our husband or wife, to our children,

to our parents, to our friends, to our neighbors, to our brothers and sisters, to our fellow Christians.

[We must also pray such a prayer to God because sometimes we accuse others of having wronged and hurt us, when in reality, they did no such thing! **BUT REAL OR IMAGINED**, for us to be free we must FORGIVE! AS WE PRAY SUCH A PRAYER to God, we must do so in the context of actively heeding Romans 12:14-21.]

II. Forgiveness is Difficult in part because we do not Understand it Properly. At this point it is necessary to clear up some of the misconceptions about forgiveness. In some ways, it is easier to say what forgiveness is not than what it is. These misconceptions matter because sometimes when we say we can't or won't forgive, we are actually talking about something other than biblical forgiveness.

Let me list a few things forgiveness does not mean: ** It does not mean approving of what someone else did. ** It does not mean pretending that evil never took place. ** It does not mean making excuses for other people's bad behavior. ** It does not mean justifying evil so that sin somehow becomes less sinful. ** It does not mean overlooking abuse. ** It does not mean denying that others tried to hurt you repeatedly. ** It does not mean refusing to press charges when a crime has been committed. ** It does not mean forgetting the wrong that was done. ** It does not mean pretending that you were never hurt. ** It does not mean that all negative consequences of sin are canceled.

AN OBSERVATION: It is possible to mouth kind words of forgiveness

while harboring anger and bitterness within. So, let me suggest that forgiveness begins in the heart and then eventually works its way outward. **Forgiveness in its essence is a decision made on the inside to refuse to live in the past.**

It's a conscious choice to release others from their sins against you so that you can be set free. It doesn't deny the pain or change the past, but it does break the cycle of bitterness that binds you to the wounds of yesterday. Forgiveness allows you to let go and move on. Forgiveness allows the Holy Spirit to be ungrieved and unquenched in your life!

It is vertical. You can forgive even when other people make no confession of their guilt — because this forgiveness is **BETWEEN YOU AND GOD!** IT IS blessing, praying, and doing good toward your offender **JUST BECAUSE JESUS**, who has forgiven you, **HAS FULL RIGHT** to reveal His forgiveness through you! (Rom. 12:14-21)

You can forgive when the other person has done nothing to earn forgiveness because forgiveness is like salvation— it is a gift that is freely given, it cannot be earned. You can forgive without saying, “I forgive you” because forgiveness is a matter of the heart.

AND WHEN WE SO FORGIVE in this manner— then, if or when the offender comes in repentance and asks for forgiveness— you will be **READY** to say, “I do forgive you!” [Indeed! Forgiveness does not make a parade; it does not make a big announcement. **RATHER**, in your heart— you forgive; and in your lifestyle, you quietly love, bless, pray for and do good to the one you feel has offended you!] ***That brings us back to the statement: “Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea until they have something to***

forgive!” Our carnal flesh screams against forgiving! Jesus tells a story about a man who owed his boss a vast debt that in today’s terms would be something like \$1 million. Some how he had run up this enormous debt and some how he had managed to spend all the money. When the boss demanded his money, the man unashamedly begged to be forgiven. He even promised to pay the money back. But the boss forgave him the whole debt. Just wiped the slate clean! Soon after that, the man who had been forgiven such an enormous sum saw a fellow who owed him a tiny debt — something like \$100. When the fellow couldn’t pay, he had him thrown into jail. But people heard about it and told the boss who got angry and had the first man thrown into jail to be tortured until he paid back the amount that previously had been forgiven. **The King James Version says that he was turned over to the “tormentors.”** The moral of the story is very clear: “This is how my Heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart” (Matthew 18:35). **These words are for believers. Jesus is teaching me that, “What happened to that man will happen to me unless I am willing to forgive and forgive and forgive!” IF I DO NOT FORGIVE—the tormentors will come and torture me.**

“What tormentors?” The hidden tormentors of anger and bitterness that eat your insides out; the tormentors of frustration and malice that give you ulcers and high blood pressure and migraine headaches and lower back pain; the tormentors that make you lie awake at night on your bed stewing over every rotten thing that happens to you. The tormentors of an unforgiving heart that stalk your trail day and night, that never leave your side, that suck

every bit of joy from your life. “Why?” Because you will not forgive from the heart. **It is happening to you just as Jesus said because you refuse to forgive.** We are like the unforgiving servant. We stand before Almighty God with our sins piled up like a mountain. The mountain is so tall we can’t get over it, so deep we can’t get under it, so wide we can’t go around it.

That’s every one of us. Our sins are like a \$100 million dollar debt we could never pay in our lifetime or in a thousand lifetimes. We come as debtors to God, come with empty hands, and we say, “I cannot pay.” God who is rich in mercy replies, “I forgive all your sins. My Son has paid the debt. You owe me nothing.” Then we rise from the pew, leave the communion table, walk outside the church humming “Lord, I Lift Your Name on High.” And before we get to our car we see a man who has done us wrong and we want to grasp him by the throat and say, “Pay me right now!”

No wonder we are so tormented. No wonder we are so angry and bitter. No wonder we have problems. No wonder our friendships don’t last. No wonder we can’t get along. We have never learned the secret of unlimited forgiveness. Verily, the hidden tormentors have done their work.

[Have you noticed— when we have an unforgiving spirit, the person toward whom we are bitter, who we insist has hurt us, even destroyed us— no matter what they may do in seeking to make amends, **IT IS NEVER ENOUGH!**

In fact, we are also quick to question the sincerity of their efforts. And in reality, it matters not if they are sincere or not— **WE ARE IN A PRISON OF OUR OWN MAKING. WE WILL NEVER BE FREE,** until or

unless we forgive.] Forgiveness is not an optional part of the Christian life. It is a necessary part of what it means to be a Christian. Let me suggest that one of the tests as to whether the Holy Spirit has been poured out on you ...on us... is our willingness and ability to forgive. Kindness, forgiveness, and a concern for lost souls is a true gauge of where we are in Christ. You cannot judge the spirituality of a Christian on the basis of his prayers— since, sadly, praying is often done for its effect on the listeners. Nor can you measure a person's spiritual status by the loudness of his "amens" and "hallelujahs." The generosity of one's giving is not an infallible test for it may be done for personal recognition or to ease one's conscience. Faithful attendance at worship or participation in church programs is not reliable either for they may all be done because of family, community, or peer pressures. A sure test of the depth of our relationship with God is found in our willingness to show compassion and to forgive those who hurt us! If we are going to follow Jesus, we must forgive. We have no other choice. "Forgiveness is the fragrance the violet gives to the heel that has crushed it." You are never more like Jesus than when you forgive. And you will never be set free until you forgive. We need two things: Soft Hearts and Humility. Some of us have been deeply hurt by the things others have done to us. People have attacked us, maligned us, mistreated us, abused us, sexually assaulted us, ridiculed us, belittled us, publicly humiliated us, physically beaten us, etc. — and they have done it deliberately, repeatedly, viciously. In response we chose to become hard on the inside to protect ourselves from any further pain. But that hardness has made it difficult for us to hear the gentle call of the Holy Spirit. We

need soft hearts to hear his voice. We need humility. **Only the humble will forgive. Only those who remain broken over their own sin; only those who remain amazed at the mercy, love and grace of God will have the HUMILITY to let go of the past.** May God soften our hearts to hear and heed this truth! May we sit at the feet of JESUS UNTIL we are freshly broken, contrite, humbled, and AMAZED at God's mercy, love and grace toward us— THEN and not until then will we (1) forgive and let go of our bitterness; (2) give up our anger, turn away from our resentment, stop keeping score; and (3) START BEING REDEMPITIVE toward our offenders! THUSLY, we enter into the miracle of total forgiveness.

[DEEP REALITY: The flesh screams that it is just so HARD to forgive IS A LIE! What is HARD is the way of the transgressor. What is HARD is to transgress God's call to forgive! **The true EASY THING**, in spite of our screaming flesh, is to humble ourselves and take the EASY YOKE OF JESUS— forgiving even as He has forgiven us!]

[DEEPER STILL: Sometimes bitterness, resentment, anger and continuing accusations against another person along with blaming him/her/them for our misery and hurt IS NOT THE RESULT of them having actually wronged or hurt us! **RATHER, those accusations, on some occasions, are but SMOKE SCREENS and false accusations to deflect and cover up our own failures! Let us not forget— Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed satan.** HOPE, FREEDOM and DELIVERANCE will only come when I take full responsibility for my own failures!]

Abundant Grace to Each and All!

James Bell / www.southsidegallatin.org

SUNDAY SERVICES for MAY 10, 17, 24, 31

[1] Sunday School at 9:30am: Nursery, Children's classes, Youth, and Adult classes. **[2] WORSHIP SERVICE at 10:45am!**

SPECIAL SERVICES during May:

***** MAY 17, LORD'S SUPPER,** at the end of the Morning Worship Service // **HOME GROUPS!**

****** MAY 24, SUNDAY EVENING WORSHIP**

EVERY SATURDAY * 8:00 AM,** — **Men's Bible Study!** (*Doors open by 7:30am... coffee, juice, donuts, and Hardee's Biscuits are available!*) **MAY 9, Romans 8:28-39**

NEXT Ladies Bible Study TUESDAY, 5/12/26 @ 11:00 AM – Read Acts 10 ***TUESDAYS: LADIES PRAYER MEETING @ 10:00am****

Young Adults ... Tuesdays at 7:15pm at Jaden and Rhi's home!

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS @ 6:30pm, MEN'S Prayer Service // YOUNG FAMILIES SERVICE

LOVE OFFERINGS UNTO THE LORD by MAIL or by ONLINE:
BY MAIL (checks), make out to Southside Baptist) — MAIL TO: Southside Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1594, Gallatin, TN 37066 / TO GIVE via ONLINE GIVING:

<https://southsidebaptist.breezechms.com/give/online>