

Forgiveness

By Steve Stutzman

Heb. 12:15 *Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of **bitterness** springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;*

One of the consistent struggles of life seems to be the struggle to forgive. All of us, everyone, have had events take place in our lives that leave a mark, a damage, of some sort. Some people have very painful events take place that alter the course of their entire life. Sometimes these events are our own fault. . . For example, we get careless and get our arm in an auger. Sometimes the events have nothing to do with our choices but are something done TO us, that we were helpless to stop. Sometimes the events were not really anyone's choice at all.

Regardless of the scene in which we were hurt, we naturally adopt a defensive stance toward the source of pain. Very seldom do we actually identify ourselves as that source of pain, even if it was in fact our fault. The reason is, we understand exactly what we were thinking (or not thinking), and so we grant ourselves a pass for what occurred. We do not understand what others around us are thinking, so we often assign extreme depravity to their motives, their character, and person. This assignment of evil to them, conjoined with our own pain, legitimizes and excuses in our own mind the angry, resentful feelings we have for them. As this cauldron of pain boils, the anger and resentment burns hotter, turning into rage, resentment, retaliation, and eventually bitterness, hatred and murder.

This bitterness causes great grief. It stymies our appetite for God, and clouds our communication with Him, making the relationship distant and awkward. Eventually this same straining of relations makes its way into our other relationships around us, souring them as well. As the aloneness, anger, and resentment build, things begin to go wrong in the physical body itself. Those emotions trigger the release of chemicals, from glands, into the bloodstream, creating reactions, imbalances, and resulting diseases of every sort. Meanwhile, the poison of the bitterness spreads from our very life and words. Cynical, sarcastic words cut into the fabric of hearts around us, leaving more wounds and the infection of bitterness in them. Angry arguments explode. Divisions happen, bringing even more hurt. . . (for what happens next, return to the top of this page)

As God views the scene, He remarks that the bitterness has sprung up, troubled us, and defiled many. Jesus affirms that in the scene are tormentors, who will continue tormenting until we get tired of being vexed. The Spirit enjoins us to *"be ye kind one to another, **tenderhearted**, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.* (Eph 4:32) I don't think there is actually much of a reason to hang on to the pain, as much as we would like to think that is a "right".

Deep down inside, we hurt. We cover the hurt with anger, and ponder in our hearts how to get even. What we really SEEK is healing, but what we DO is called unforgiveness. A lot of the reason we don't forgive, at least early in the process, is because we want the offender to hurt too. To forgive looks like just giving them a free pass. I would like to look at what forgiveness is NOT, then at one way to walk into it.

1. *Forgiveness is NOT a feeling*
2. *Forgiveness is NOT pretending you were not hurt*
3. *Forgiveness is NOT condoning what the other person did to you*
4. *Forgiveness is NOT trust*
5. *Forgiveness is NOT relieving the other person of all responsibility*

Several prominent Christian periodicals stated that articles about forgiveness generate more dialogue, and even criticism, that anything else they print. I suppose there may be as many ideas about forgiveness as there are denominations, and we don't need more of those. But I would like to portray a simple thing we do around forgiveness, that has been very effective in many lives. Leading a wounded soul, one phrase at a time, we take them through a prayer that might look something like this:

Dear Holy Father in Heaven, I come to You today in the Name of Jesus Christ. I am coming in front of Your Judgement seat, because I need help, and I know You are a Good Father, and a Righteous Judge. Father, I have been hurt very, very badly. There are wounds, scars, scabs and hurts inside I don't know how to handle, and never have. I just hurt. (*description of what happened*) was done to me. You knew it Father, because You saw it all. In my hurt, I have not known how to forgive, and today I am coming to You for help, because I choose forgiveness. So, I come before Your Throne, bringing to You (*offender*) in my hands. I set them before Your Throne, take my hands off, and back away. I release them to You, vengeance is Yours. I turn to Jesus Christ my Advocate, and I bring to You my unforgiveness. I acknowledge it as sin before You, and I lay it down, put it under the blood, and renounce it in Jesus Name. I separate myself from the sin of unforgiveness, of anger, and of (*bitterness, rage, resentment.... whatever level it had come to*) and I repent of having walked in agreement with the devil in these things. I bring to You Lord Jesus, my searing, burning pain. I take it in strands, and lay my pain into the lash marks on Your body. (*allow time for this to process*) I release onto the body of my Saviour all my pain that I have felt and carried, for You said by Your stripes I am healed. I bring to You all the lies I have believed, through the pain I experienced. (*this should be a previously written list, individually spoken and repented of*) I choose to believe instead, truth that You the God of Heaven said about me. (*a counter- list, written ahead of time*) I renounce the darkness of bitterness, and I choose to forgive in the Name of Jesus, the same way I am asking to be forgiven by You, Almighty Father.

The prayer might go on to include other things, but this is the general idea: Release of person who hurt us to God (Rm 12:19), sorrow bringing recognition and ownership of sin (2 Cor. 7:11), bringing of hurts to Jesus and His stripes (Is. 53:5, Lk 4:18), renouncing of lies and believing of truth (2 Cor.4:1-7), and ultimately, forgiveness. (Col. 3:13). [Following that, I would have someone take authority over this spirit and command it to leave the hurting individual. 2 Tim 2:24-26]

This is not intended to be some sort of mantra or magic formula. I am well aware that there are many situations far more complicated than others, and need much more help; in fact, most times this should be done with several other folks that are trustworthy. It is simply a pathway that seems fairly straight-forward toward arriving at a place of forgiveness.

I would like to add one final thing here: a prayer of blessing. Pray for God to bless those who hurt you and despitefully used you. Pray for His blessing on them, by name, for 2 minutes each day for 2 weeks. This will allow you to learn, over that time, how to actually LIVE in forgiveness toward people who hurt you.

May God Bless you and bring healing to the deepest, most wounded places of your heart, and bring you into a place of profound joy and freedom.