

Spiritual Warfare 3 – “Bitterness vs. Forgiveness”

Ephesians 6:14-17; Matthew 18:21-35

Why talk about forgiveness in a series on spiritual warfare?

1. When we do not forgive others we join in the enemy’s work of accusation & division. John 10:10

- 2 Corinthians 2:10-11: Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, *“so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.”*

2. Forgiveness of sins is at the center of Jesus’ mission. Matthew 1:21; 26:28; Luke 24:45-47

- Matthew 1:21: ...you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.
- Matthew 26:28: ...this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

3. Forgiveness of sins is central to the message of the apostles. Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18

- Acts 10:43: To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.
- Acts 13:38: Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you...
- Acts 26:18: ...to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light & from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

Matthew 18:21-35: The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

1. Biblical forgiveness involves both ‘vertical’ & ‘horizontal’ dimensions (relationship with God & others).

- Jesus told this story in direct response to Peter asking about forgiving others. v.21-22

2. Biblical forgiveness involves cancelling a debt. v.27, 30

- When you forgive someone, you make a conscious decision to ‘cancel their debt’:
 - a. You decide to not use the person’s offense against them. (i.e., as leverage, for control or power)
 - b. You decide to not use the person’s offense to slander them before others.
 - c. You decide to not dwell on the person’s offense yourself. (E.g., replaying the offense in your mind)

3. Biblical forgiveness is an act of the will.

- Mind (Truth) → What does the Bible say? King Jesus has forgiven me & told me to forgive others
- Will (Faith) → I BELIEVE, therefore I choose to forgive.
- Emotions → My feelings *may or may not* be in line with the truth and my faith.

4. Biblical forgiveness involves a sense of injustice. v.24, 28

Why do we not forgive?

1. Hanging onto the offense/injustice can give a sense of comfort and power. Ref. Genesis 27:41-42

- Forgiving someone puts you in a position of vulnerability and powerlessness.
- “Revenge is a confession of pain.” -From Star Wars’ *Clone Wars*

→ ‘Pain that is not transformed is transferred’

2. We are waiting for the offender to acknowledge the harm they’ve done.

- Reality check: Rarely does anyone ever truly see the full extent of their sin and the harm they’ve done.
- Should we forgive someone even if they don’t acknowledge an offense? Luke 23:34: And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And they cast lots to divide his garments.

→ Your need to forgive isn’t an issue between you and the offender—it’s between you and God.

The God Who forgives... Psalm 103:10-13... invites YOU to the cross.

Dear Heavenly Father, I thank you for the riches of Your kindness, forbearance, and patience towards me, knowing that Your kindness has led me to repentance [Romans 2:4]. I confess that I have not shown that same kindness toward those who have hurt or offended me. Instead, I have held on to my anger, bitterness, and resentment toward them. Please bring to my mind all the people and offenses I need to forgive in order that I may now do so. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

For every offense and painful memory that God reveals for each person who has wronged you, pray as follows:

Dear Heavenly Father, I choose to forgive [name the person] **for** [what they did or failed to do], **because it impacted me this way** [name the ways what they did or failed to do impacted you, how it made you feel, for example: unimportant, rejected, worthless, inferior, ashamed, inferior, etc.].

→ It is important to specifically name the offense and put words to the impact it had on you.

- At the end of the list, write "myself." 'Forgiving yourself' means choosing to accept God's cleansing and forgiveness.

Lord Jesus, I choose not to hold on to my resentment. I relinquish my right to seek revenge and ask you to heal my damaged emotions. Thank You for setting me free from the bondage of my bitterness. I now ask You to bless those who have hurt me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

→ It is important to pray specifically for the Lord to bless those who have hurt you.

- Romans 12:14: Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.

"To forgive the incessant provocations of daily life—to keep on forgiving the bossy mother-in-law, the bullying husband, the nagging wife, the selfish daughter, the deceitful son—how can we do it? Only, I think, by remembering where we stand, by meaning our words when we say in our prayers each night, 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us.' We are offered forgiveness on no other terms. To refuse it is to refuse God's mercy for ourselves. There is no hint of exceptions and God means what he says." -CS Lewis

"The Lord's Prayer commands us to pray, 'Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,' right after it instructs us to pray for daily bread. Practicing forgiveness is something we must do daily in the same way we ask for the daily provision of food. It is a part of everyday life...."

-From *Relationships: A Mess Worth Making*, by Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp