

Now Concerning Spiritual Things

an historical account of one man's walk with God

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In my letters of November 1, 1997 and January 10, 1998, I shared with you what the Lord had taught me on **Forgiveness** and **The Power of Forgiveness**. This letter is a special supplement which includes both teachings. The two articles are presented as they were originally written, since I have made no effort to edit out the few redundancies.

Around the middle of the first century A.D., James wrote these words to the twelve scattered tribes of Israel, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed."¹ Unforgiveness is sin. Because of what the Lord has shown me, I am persuaded that many prayers are hindered, that spiritual growth is stifled and that spiritual, mental and physical illness may be the result of unforgiveness harbored in one's heart. If you have a problem with forgiveness, this letter has been prepared to free you from the yoke of such bondage.

FORGIVENESS

In the "Sermon on The Mount"² Jesus taught on the subject of prayer, particularly in the sixth chapter of Matthew, verses 5 through 17. Previously I had not seriously considered verses 14 and 15 which deal with forgiveness and verses 16 and 17 which deal with fasting, as a continuation of His teaching on prayer. But I have been shown that forgiveness AND fasting in these verses are *a part of His teaching on prayer*.

Concerning forgiveness: "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."³ If you have sinned against someone else, that sin stands between you and God until you take the necessary steps to be reconciled to the one or ones offended.⁴ The Apostle John adds, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."⁵ Confession therefore cleanses us and reconciles us to God; confession, apology and restitution, if in order, cleanses us and reconciles us to the other offended one.

But that may be the easy part of the forgiveness prescription.

The more difficult part is the reverse side of forgiveness. What about someone whose sin or sins offend you when there is no intent or ability by the offender to right the wrong. Further, assume someone sins against you and it is impractical or impossible to use the solution given by Jesus in Matthew 18:15-17. Regardless of the circumstances, or the condition of the party who sinned against you, whether he is dead or alive, (death does not pardon unforgiveness) you must forgive him! There can be no exception. This, of course, includes extreme cases of sin against you, against someone you know or against someone you know about. Regardless of the offense, and regardless of who was harmed by the offense, you must not harbor unforgiveness. And our example is Jesus. He paid the price for our sins on the cross⁶ and forgave everyone. And so must we, or we will not be forgiven. To enforce this further, look at what Jesus said to Peter the Apostle: "Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.'"⁷ Then Jesus told a parable about a master, moved with compassion, who forgave his servant a 10,000 talent debt, the equivalent of \$16,425,000. This same servant who was owed a 100-denarii debt (the equivalent of \$17.00)⁸ by a fellow servant, threw him in prison till he should pay the debt. When the master found out about the unforgiving servant, Jesus, in concluding the parable, said, "And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you, if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."⁹ The word *torturers* here refers to jailors who elicit information by torture. However, there is another meaning which is spiritual and is applicable to this parable today. Torturers means demonic spirits of evil who

⁶Romans 5:8.

⁷Matthew 18:21,22.

⁸Source of these dollar figures: **The New Analytical Bible And Dictionary Of The Bible**, New Analytical Edition, (John A. Dickson Publishing Company, 1950), Weights & Measures, p. 1464. These dollar figures were reportedly accurate when the conversion was made about 1950. However, it is the relative comparison of the dollar figures that is important. The master forgave a debt almost one million times greater than the debt the servant was unwilling to forgive.

⁹Matthew 18:34,35.

¹James 5:16 (a), RSV.

²Matthew Chapters 5, 6, & 7.

³Matthew 6:14, 15.

⁴See Matthew 5:23, 24.

⁵1 John 1:9.

gain entry through the mind as the result of thoughts, words and actions which are the consequences of unforgiveness. For additional reinforcement, the bible declares, “*Be angry, and do not sin*”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.”¹⁰ Anger may be the root cause of unforgiveness which, if not dealt with, can lead to such things as bitterness, self righteousness, self pity, self condemnation, retaliation and resentment, for example. If dwelt on and not dealt with, these “problem thoughts” can allow entry of demonic spirits which may become the cause of spiritual, mental, physical illness and death, the wages of sin.¹¹

But how does one handle a situation where the hurt is so deep and emotional that it is impossible to truly forgive from the heart? Here is the solution. First, be honest to God. Tell Him exactly how you feel and what you think about the offense and the offender. **Hold nothing back. Be brutally frank.** He already knows what is in your heart, but you must confess it to Him to *start* the healing process. Also confess to Him your unforgiveness, your desire to forgive from the heart, **but your inability to do so and ask Him to heal you.** Then, while **trusting in the Lord**, with your eyes on Him (not the offender!), thank Him for your healing and begin to confess orally to Him in prayer, and at other times as the thought occurs to you, I forgive _____ (name of the offender). Next, pray for the Lord to bless the one who harmed you.¹² Continue this procedure by faith as the substance of things hoped for until the evidence of things not seen¹³ becomes a reality in your heart. What you then confess with your lips¹⁴ will confirm what is in your heart and you are free. This is not the power of positive thinking, but the power of the Word of God to change lives when we act by faith on what the Word says. And it works! “The kingdom of heaven is likened unto an antibiotic coursing through the veins on a seek and destroy mission”¹⁵ A physician gives a patient with double pneumonia an antibiotic prescription to take three times daily for 10 days. If the lungs are not clear in 10 days, the prescription is refilled. That’s 60 tablets taken over a 20-day period. The patient has

¹⁰Ephesians 4:26, 27.

¹¹But let the reader take heart and know full well that believers today have been given authority over demonic spirits in the Name of Jesus. See Mark 16:17.

¹²This is in keeping with what Jesus said, “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.” (Matthew 5:44).

¹³See Hebrews 11:1.

¹⁴See Romans 10:9, 10.

¹⁵James L. Ash, **For Christians Only**, “Gleanings” (Published by James L. Ash, 1989), p. 43.

faith in the physician, in the antibiotic prescription and is healed. But he doesn’t stop the medication after taking 19 of the tablets. It is the same with difficult cases of forgiveness. When we have faith in the Physician and His Word, the prescription is “with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”¹⁶ In the kingdom, confession *precedes* possession, but in the world, confession *follows* possession. One biblical example is, “that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”¹⁷ This scripture affirms that confession with the mouth precedes the possession of salvation in Christ. Confession¹⁸ is a powerful spiritual tool for the believer -- it is a *kingdom principle*. The bible declares that Christ Jesus is the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.¹⁹ As I was learning this principle, one day the Lord spoke to me and said, “Make public your confession. As you do so you are strengthened therein.”²⁰ And these thoughts followed: As you make public your confession, you water the seed²¹ within you and cause it to germinate, grow, flourish and bear fruit. But if you speak [confess] negative, harsh or critical words, you create a drought within and no growth can occur. Further, if the seed has grown and flourished and you then speak negative or critical words, that growth withers and dies. The sum of plus one and minus one equals zero. This is confirmed in Proverbs 6:12, “You are snared by the words of your mouth; you are taken by the words of your mouth.” Further, when we as Christians make public our confession, that

is, speak as the oracles of God as the apostle Peter wrote,²² and

¹⁶Romans 10:10 (b).

¹⁷Romans 10:9, 10.

¹⁸Confession meaning a lifetime of believing with our heart and *saying* or *confessing* with our lips everyone of God’s promises, *thereby claiming them as our own!*

¹⁹Hebrews 3:1. The Authorized Version translates the word “profession” here instead of “confession.” However, this does the context no harm since Webster’s dictionary defines “profession” as an open declaration or public avowal. Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament words translates the word “confession” and a number of translations later than the AV use the word “confession.”

²⁰This is the same principle expressed by the apostle Paul whereby one, by faith in God, “calls those things which do not exist as though they did.” [See Romans 4:17 (b)]

²¹The seed in this teaching is the word of God, exactly as Jesus taught in the parable of the Sower in Luke 8:5-15.

²²1 Peter 4:11 (a).

learn to avoid negative confession, growth will flourish. And here's another goodie: As a believer, when you make public your confession, you water the implanted seed with Living Water, the Holy Spirit; hence the supernatural Word, watered with supernatural Water grows and flourishes to bring forth fruit in the kingdom to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Confession waters the seed; prayer fertilizes it. Believe it, practice it and be blessed.

As the Lord was teaching me about forgiveness, for some period of time my attention was drawn to the following incident as related by the Apostle John. After His resurrection, but before His ascension, Jesus appeared to a group of His disciples and said to them, “. . . Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit, if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they are retained.’”²³ This statement by the resurrected Jesus certainly has reference to preaching the good news that Jesus died for our sins and when we turn to Him in repentance, accept Him as our savior and Lord, our sins are remitted, for without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins.²⁴ But I believe there is much more than that implied by what Jesus said on this occasion. When we forgive others whose actions are unworthy of forgiveness, *it does something for us*. It frees us from bondage to sin and allows us to do things in the kingdom we would otherwise be unable to do. For example, there are some things concerning forgiveness I have been led to do by the Holy Spirit which I am not at liberty to share at this time, but here is one I can share. For years my daily prayers have included a circle of people by name. One morning I was praying for three people with whom I formerly had a business relationship, as I had done for years. But this time, I know in retrospect, I was led by the Holy Spirit to say to the Lord, “I forgive these three people of every sin they have ever committed.” As I did so, I began to weep under the power of the Holy Spirit. After that I was able to enter into fervent prayer for them as I had not done before. Neither of the three had harmed me, and, if I know my heart, I harbored no unforgiveness toward any of them. I do believe, however, that two of the three had been involved in something that was not right in God's sight. My thought about the prayer, therefore, was that my willingness to forgive them, as led by the Spirit, allowed me or freed me to more efficaciously pray for them as an intercessor. Of course, each of them is responsible to God on a personal basis as each of us is, but a willingness to forgive releases the power of God unattainable any other way and carries with it blessings for both parties.

Unforgiveness does not bring about restitution or reconciliation, does not harm, “get even with” or change the

offender. “Unforgiveness is as idolatry,”²⁵ is harmful only to the one offended and stands as sentinel at the door of blessing.

Recently I was watching an evening TV newscast. The news subject was the execution of a death-row inmate by the State of Texas in Huntsville. I'm not sure I remember the details of the crime correctly, but as I recall, the man was convicted of raping and killing a child. But here is the thing I do remember. The mother of the victim found that she had forgiveness in her heart for the criminal and went to death-row in Huntsville to visit the man who had killed her daughter. She told him that she had forgiven him, that she loved him and that God loved him. And the man wept. The next day he was executed. That, in essence, sums up God's teaching on forgiveness. Two lives blessed instead of two lives cursed. Two lives freed instead of two lives bound. To God be the glory for His marvelous ways in loving us while we were yet sinners,²⁶ and choosing to humble himself, even to death on a cross,²⁷ to take upon Himself our sins, our iniquities, our diseases, our pains, our sorrows,²⁸ and then offer to all who will accept His invitation, the opportunity to be loved into Life forever.²⁹ That is what our Lord has done for us. Dear reader, if you don't know the Lord Jesus, ask Him now by faith to come into your heart through the precious Holy Spirit, to make Himself known to you personally and you will never be the same. Trust Him today for an abundant life now with Heaven as your eternal reward.

THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS

For some time prior to September 27, 1996, the Holy Spirit began to call my attention to the fact that after the resurrection, but prior to the ascension, Jesus appeared to a group of His disciples, breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”³⁰ After this had been on my mind for a number of days, I was led by

²⁵These words were given to me by the Holy Spirit about September 25, 1997.

²⁶Romans 5:8.

²⁷Philippians 2:8.

²⁸Isaiah 53:4, 5.

²⁹John 3:16; Revelation 3:20; 21:6.

³⁰John 20:22, 23.

²³John 20:21-23.

²⁴See the 9th Chapter of Hebrews.

the Spirit to lay hands³¹ on the world by faith³² and then found myself saying, "I forgive the sins of everyone who has ever lived on the face of the earth from Adam to the cross, from the cross to this present day and everyone alive today on every continent, every island, every boat and ship in every harbor, river, stream, lake, sea and ocean all over the world." As I finished, the Holy Spirit spoke to me and said, "That's what Jesus did."³³ As these words were spoken to me it was as though I was 'lifted' to a new position of boldness and authority in prayer, a position I had never before occupied. This was neither a vision nor anything ethereal. It was just a very real inward feeling. And this inward feeling was so vivid or pronounced, my thought was to look around to examine my new surroundings and see what they were like -- to see if anyone else was there. Not long afterward, I was in prayer with a group one evening and found myself saying bolder statements by faith concerning spiritual warfare, for example, than I had ever made before. It is interesting to realize in retrospect, that the Holy Spirit had said to me, "Be bold in prayer," and was now in the process of teaching me what that meant so I could be obedient to that which I was instructed to do.³⁴

Along with new boldness in prayer, there came some intensive teaching on forgiveness about which I had previously read in the Bible, but had never before clearly 'seen.' This insight, of course, was the result of revelation knowledge.³⁵ In

³¹The laying on of hands is an elementary doctrine of Christ. See Hebrews 6:2.

³²See Matthew 8:5 - 13 for the account of Jesus healing the Centurion's servant without going to his bedside. Distance does not negate faith; faith bridges distance.

³³I didn't do this because Jesus did it, I did so only as led by the Holy Spirit. Otherwise I would NEVER have done such a thing. I later became reassured that I was led to do this by the Holy Spirit as I related the incident to five other people around noon in the House of Prayer on October 22, 1996.

³⁴In his prayer for guidance, the Psalmist David prayed, "Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; Your Spirit is good. Lead me in the land of uprightness." (Psalm 143:10, NKJV). And Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you, while I am still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." (John 14:25, 26, RSV). The Apostle Paul also affirms the same thing when he wrote, "These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches..." (1 Corinthians 2:13, NKJV).

³⁵See Matthew 11:25; 16:17. Revelation knowledge came neither from flesh and blood or from the intellect during the time of Jesus, nor does it come that way today. It is revealed to babes, not to the worldly wise; to the lowly ones of a broken and contrite heart, as the Lord Himself said, "...for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you shall find rest for your souls." (Matthew 11:29). And revelation knowledge

my letter of 11/1/97, I shared some things I had learned on forgiveness, particularly on difficult or seemingly impossible cases of forgiveness, so that will not be repeated here. However, here is something additional I was shown. In the Lord's teaching on Prayer, the 'Lord's Prayer' or the 'model prayer' as it is sometimes called, is generally concluded with Matthew 6:13.³⁶ But what I have been shown is that verses 14 and 15³⁷ on forgiveness are a continuation of His teaching on prayer, since effectual prayer is not possible with an unforgiving heart toward anyone! And this includes sins against us whether the offender is dead or alive, or has no intention of restitution, or of asking our forgiveness under any circumstance. Unforgiveness harbored in our heart against *anyone* constitutes unforgiveness in God's heart against us. Therefore, we must forgive our friends and enemies alike, whose sin was either against us or someone else, or we will not be forgiven by God, and here is why. Unforgiveness perpetuates evil. Forgiveness is a nonresistant act which absorbs the full force of evil and comes forth victorious. When you 'take no offense' against the one who offends you, sin is defeated in *your* heart. But when you forgive the offender, *you* become the *aggressor* and evil is disarmed. Then is when forgiveness becomes "sharper than a two-edged sword"³⁸ to defeat evil in the heart of both the offended *and* the offender. The act of Jesus in forgiving mankind struck at the very source of evil and defeated *him*. That is why forgiveness is powerful -- it defeats Satan, the source of evil. And I believe that is why on September 27, 1996, the Holy Spirit led me in the prayer of forgiveness of mankind to 'do what Jesus did.' That prayer opened a floodgate of Spiritual enlightenment which I must give away. Forgiveness permits us to take a giant step forward in our relationship with man and with God. This is a powerful *kingdom principle* which yields abundant blessings.

comes only by and through the Holy Spirit. That is why it is imperative to accept all scriptural teaching concerning the work of the Holy Spirit as relevant *for today*, since He is the Author of the instructional manual for Life. When in doubt read instructions, is a good rule, and the instruction manual is the Bible. And the Spirit will teach *you* if you will ask Him. The reason I know is that He has taught me and continues to teach me as I seek guidance from Him.

³⁶"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Other authorities, some ancient, add, in some form, "For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, for ever, Amen." (RSV including added note.)

³⁷"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

³⁸Hebrews 4:12.