

“Forgiveness”

Mathew 6:14-15

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.



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“FORGIVENESS”

Preached by Rev. James R. Reynolds, Sr.

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INTRODUCTION

- **Professor Charlotte Van Oyen** of Hope College (Michigan) was part of a study that was considering causes of increased blood pressure in people. Each subjects blood pressure and heart rates increased, as well as muscle tension was shown to be higher when an individual is walking in unforgiveness as opposed to walking in forgiveness. Stress leads to a host of other illnesses that land people in hospitals daily.
- **Dr. Don Colbert, M.D.**, “One of the secret causes of stress plaguing millions of people is unforgiveness.”
- **People often feel justified to be unforgiving because of pain they have suffered;** however, it ultimately destroys the person that is unforgiving and not the offender.
- **World Research** links cancer to unforgiveness.
- **Stanford University Center for Research in Disease Prevention** published, “When you hold onto the bitterness for years, it stops you from living your life fully. As it turns out, It wears out your immune system and hurts your heart.”
- **Dr. Everett L. Worthington**, a psychology professor at Virginia Commonwealth University, "Chronic unforgiveness causes stress. Every time people think of their transgressor, their body responds. Decreasing your unforgiveness cuts down your health risk. Now, if you can forgive, that can actually strengthen your immune system."
- (More sources can be found in the addendum.)

I. Forgiveness is a Divine Action

Psalm 103:3,4—*Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.*

1. Christ forgives us and helps us to forgive those who sin against us. Forgiveness is a Divine activity. If Christ is in our heart, He will help us forgive those that hurt us.

The wife of a Zulu priest snuck into a Christian meeting and responded to the salvation call. Upon discovering this, her husband forbade her to never to go to another meeting. She was still eager to go and went anyway. Her husband met her on the street on her return home and beat her so severely that he left her for dead. Curiosity moved him to go back to where he left. He found her moved from where he left her, but his search found her hidden under a bush. Looking at her he sneered, "What can your Jesus do for you?" She gently looked at him and answered, "He helps me to forgive you."

2. You cannot control your circumstances, but you can rule your response to your circumstances.
Ephesians 4:31,32—*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, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

Colossians 3:13—*Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*

3. A connection between forgiving and being forgiven.
Matthew 6:14,15—*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

4. Men who will not forgiven cannot be forgiven. If you hold bitterness and unforgiveness against people, God will not forgive you.

John Wesley, heard an unusual noise coming from the cabin of a general with whom Wesley was sailing. As Wesley stepped into the cabin, the general apologized.

"Mr. Wesley You must excuse me, but I have met with a provocation beyond what I can bear. My valet has stolen from my cabin, but I will have my revenge on him. He will be tied hand and foot and tied to the mast of the man-of-war. That rascal should have taken care how he used me, **because I never forgive.**"

Wesley said, "I hope, sir, you never sin." The general quickly took a bunch of keys out of his pocket and threw them at his valet.

"There villain, take my keys and be better behaved in the future."

Matt. 6:12—*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*

II. Forgiveness Brings Reconciliation

1. Forgiveness reconciles us to our brothers.
Matthew 5:23,24—*Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

DL Moody remembered one town that he and Mr. Ira Sankey had visited. "For a week it seemed as if we were beating the air; there was no power in the meetings." At last, one day, Moody suggested, "Perhaps there is someone cultivating an unforgiving spirit." The chairman of the meeting, who was sitting next to Moody, immediately left the meeting in plain view of the audience. The chairman had been holding strong feelings against someone in that congregation. The chairman had left to hunt out the man whom he had not forgiven and told him, "Please forgive me." The chair man came back with tears in his eyes and thanked Moody that he came that night. Moody remarked, "That night the inquiry room was filled with souls repenting before God and revival broke out."

Why? Because someone got unforgiveness out of their heart. Forgiveness brings reconciliation.

2. The spirit of forgiveness is the spirit of mercy.

Proverbs 11:17—*The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh.*

Who does revenge and bitterness hurt? Yourself. They probably do not even know how you feel! It is best to take it to the foot of the cross and cry for help. You should forgive it is good for your OWN PEACE. Revenge is like a thorn in the flesh.

III. Forgiveness is a Divine Characteristic

Matthew 5:44,45—*But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*

Our problem is not altogether the world, but is right inside here amongst ourselves. How are going to distinguish a child of God from one that is not? By our characteristics. Are we acting like Christ? A measure of maturity: **How willing are you to forgive others?**

1. Divine Forgiveness is Absolute.

Ephesians 1:7—*In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;*

He did not just show us an example, but He paid our debt.

2. Divine Forgiveness is Complete.

Psalms 103:3—*Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;*

What a deal we get! **God** paid a great price to take away **our** sin! God's forgiveness covers **ALL**.

3. Divine Forgiveness is Immediate.

I have heard of hospitals telling people to come back later because of a lack of room. If I had a need and was in trouble I would not want to be told to come back. When you ask God for forgiveness he does not tell you to come back in a week or month, but His forgiveness is **immediate**. He made the provision long before you made the confession.

I John 1:9—*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

A young man said to a missionary, "I am so happy Jesus has forgiven me that I will do anything for him."

The missionary said to him, "Are you sure you would do anything for him? Because the Bible says, 'thou shalt do no murder.'"

"Well you don't understand, that man killed my father!"

The missionary dealt with him for a long time. He came back one day and said, "Sometimes I feel inside like I'm gonna forgive him and then something else rises up and I want to kill him again."

"When that forgiveness rises up that is the spirit of God. When that ugly thing rises up to murder, that is the devil. You need to get rid of that."

After a while, the young man eventually gave up his murderous desire. He sent an invitation for the murderer to come over to his house on the other side of the river as a friend. Eventually the man accepted. By the end of the visit that man invited the young man to come to his house. The young man crossed the river himself and spent a long time with the murderer of his father. This older man watched anxiously from high up on a cliff as the young man got into his boat to leave. The young man noticed a camouflaged hole in his boat

and knew instantly it was purposely made. He quickly filled up the hole and as he continued to row turned and waved to the murderous man on the cliff, "I freely forgive you for Jesus freely forgave me of all my sin."

ADDENDUM

(1) **What does it mean to forgive?** In *The Five Languages of Apology*, by Dr. Gary Chapman (also author of *The Five Love Languages*) simply states, "To forgive means to cover, to take away; to pardon; and to be gracious to. When we forgive, it means to lift the penalty and to pardon the offender. Forgiveness is not a feeling, but a decision. This does not mean that trust is immediately restored."

(2) **"People often feel justified to be in unforgiveness** because of what they had to endure, or pain they had to suffer; however, it ultimately destroys the person that is the one that is in unforgiveness, not the other person. Whenever we are wronged or an offense has been committed towards us, at that moment, we have the option to forgive that person or that wrong. The human brain is like a computer, it is a memory bank, whether it's short-term or long term, it releases biochemical stress responses when you meditate and rehearse all the offenses that have been committed towards you. I have heard it said that the individual that is in unforgiveness is the one drinking the deadly poison, but instead wishing the other person would die."

(<http://ezinearticles.com/?Unforgiveness---A-Deadly-Virus&id=784282;>

http://www.chce.research.va.gov/docs/pdfs/pi_publications/Harris/2005_Harris_Thorsen_HF.pdf)

(3) "Physical Health: A healthy lifestyle is what many people value, but when they are angry, they seek out ways to escape their situation and their way of dealing with things is usually self destructive. Some people overeat or don't eat at all, and some turn to drugs and alcohol as a way to forget. When something weighs heavy on the mind it also hinders or interrupts a person's sleep. Without proper rest, their bodies are susceptible to sickness and then before you know it, they have a forgiveness issue and a physical decline."

(http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/505201/infected_hearts_the_dangers_of_unforgiveness.html)

(4) "The program's preliminary work suggests that forgiveness lowered the stress hormone cortisol that in turn affects the immune system, but only when the patients forgave the ones they blamed". [University of Maryland - Institute of Human Virology]

(5) "Forgiveness could boost the immune system by reducing the production of the stress hormone cortisol" [Rockefeller University - New York]

(6) "When you hold onto the bitterness for years, it stops you from living your life fully. As it turns out, it wears out your immune system and hurts your heart" [Stanford University Center for Research in Disease Prevention]

(7) "Those who received forgiveness training showed improvements in the blood flow to their hearts" [University of Wisconsin - Research Dept]

(8) Researchers at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research found that forgiveness was linked with better self-reported mental and physical health.

(9) A new study from Duke University Medical Center demonstrates that those who forgive others experience lower levels of chronic pain and less associated psychological problems like anger and depression than those who have not forgiven.

(10) Researchers at Ohio States University found that the highly stressed women had lower levels of natural killer cells than women who reported less stress. "Natural killer cells have an extremely important function with regard to cancer because they are capable of detecting and killing cancer cells. Psychological interventions, such as forgiveness, have important roles in reducing stress and improving quality of life, but also in extending survival." [Barbara Andersen, Professor of Psychology, Ohio State University]

(11) "I have collected 57 extremely well documented so-called cancer miracles. At a certain particular moment in time they decided that the anger and the depression were probably not the best way to go, since they had such little time left. And so they went from that to being loving, caring, no longer angry, no longer depressed, and able to talk to the people they loved. These 57 people had the same pattern. They gave up, totally, their anger, and they gave up, totally, their depression, by specifically a decision to do so. And at that point the tumors started to shrink." [Yale Medical School - Dr Bernie Seigel, Clinical Professor of Surgery]

(12) "When I suggest emotional healing to people with cancer, they always misunderstand me. They hear it as emotional support. They think I either just want to comfort them, or show them how to have a more positive attitude. They don't get that something like forgiveness might be the key to their getting well. I see their eyes glaze over when I go on to say that emotional toxicity is most likely the cause of their cancer, and that forgiveness, if used with appropriate treatments and lifestyle changes that address the physical, is a 'first-line' primary treatment. Their inability to hear this as a strategy for survival, is a measure of how brainwashed we all are into thinking that treatment for cancer must always be harsh, drastic and violent. With our War-on-Cancer mind-set, it's hard to imagine that something so seemingly soft and gentle as forgiveness could be the answer to our problem." [Colin Tipping, Director, Institute of Radical Forgiveness] (http://www.alternative-cancer-care.com/Cancer_Counseling.html)

(13) Unforgiveness is a complex mixture of thoughts, attitudes, beliefs and emotions involving a feeling of injustice. If a person transgresses another they can find it very difficult to offer the transgressor their unconditional forgiveness. If this conceptualisation is correct it implicates a whole range of correlations between stress and immune response. This is demonstrated by many psychoneuroimmunology research projects and in particular, research conducted by Kiecolt-Glaser et al (2002). They found that a high level of stress significantly correlated with immune dysregulation.