

Suffering

Part 4

Following Jesus Example in Forgiveness

“32 Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. 33 When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals-- one on his right, the other on his left. 34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.” (Luke 23’32-34)

Christ suffered on the cross for our sins to save us and give us eternal life. He left us an example that we need to follow in His steps, **“To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.” (1Peter 2:21)** Jesus passed through the experience of the cross and overcome because he adopted the attitude of forgiveness. Forgiveness is God’s way to save people and the way for people to enter the Kingdom of God. When there is forgiveness, God delight in that, and His Holy Spirit will be there to help things to be orchestrated and happen as ordained by His will.

Jesus offered himself on the cross through the Holy Spirit as we can read on **Hebrews 9:14** **“How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!”** And the point that we need to emphasize to you that when you go along the will of God you will find the Holy Spirit there to assist you and to help you to do that particular task. Crucifixion is painful agonizing but Jesus was not alone, the Holy Spirit made it happen in a way glorified God.

When you read the stories of the early church leaders and the missionaries who underwent persecution and were executed for Christ, they truly passed through painful times but they were not alone and they were helped because they adopted the right attitude of forgiveness to those who persecute them.

Jesus on the cross after his crucifixion he prayed the following: **“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”** But to whom he offered prayer that God the Father would forgive them their sins?

From the events of Jesus’ crucifixion, you can learn who the people who had hurt you are, and in which way: so that you can understand events in your life in a better way in order for you to deal with them appropriately. Forgiveness needed to be directed to the following categories of people:

1- Jealous and envious people: The high and the chief priests with the Pharisees are the people who plotted against Jesus because of their envy and Jealousy. People who are envious and jealous of you might hurt you with their jealousy.

2- Non faithful and non committed people: When Jesus was arrested all his disciples left Him, including those who affirmed to Him that they will not leave Him even if it caused them death. People who promised you certain things and they left you especially in times of your troubles and they let you down, they are the people who caused you hurt.

3- People who are hypocrites and delight in politics: When Jesus was arrested, he was brought to Pilate to be sent to death. Now Pontus Pilate knew that Jesus is innocent and out of envy the Jews wanted to execute Him. But because he wanted to please them he agreed with them. The governors who do not practice justice and give you your rights they are harming you and you need to forgive them.

4- People whom you are not meeting their expectations: Two criminals were crucified with Jesus and they were hurling insults on Jesus because they were expecting Him to help them. In the same way people may insult you and speak bad to you or about you because you did not go or do what they want from you.

5- People who are hungry to get things from the world: The Roman soldiers treated Jesus without mercy and without consideration; they pierced his hands and feet. They were waiting to do that to share with themselves his clothes. People who steal from you and take by force what belong to you without considering your interest they are harming you.

6- People who are illiterate and powerless: The crowd who shouted to Pilate and requested him to crucify Jesus they were illiterate people without any power and were enslaved by the chief priests and the Pharisees. People who are of such category they might be used by others to harm you, therefore you need to forgive them.

7- People who take advantage of your suffering and got relieved of their due punishment: Barabbas was release at the cost of Jesus sent to death. Sometime your privileges are withheld from you and be given to wicked people who do not deserve them.

8- Yourself: Jesus was arrested in a place called Gethsemane with the help of one of His disciples. Somebody would say, *‘Why he did not deal with Judas before this would happen,’* or someone may say *‘Why he went to Gethsemane and why he did not go to other place?’* Certain times you are blaming yourself with the same way as above. You are not the one at fault but at fault those who sinned against God and harmed you. Forgive yourself; you have done your part.

9- God: You might be tempted and say, *‘Why God did that, or why God made me a victim?’* God is not at fault, but the people who harmed you.

The above description is helpful for you so that you can see things in more clear way so you can practice forgiveness and be set free. Moreover the followings are the possible things that you might be harmed and affected:

A- Material losses: Even Jesus’ clothes were taken away.

B- Humiliation: You might be named and accused badly to the public and get bad reputation. You might be considered and categorized among sinners or criminals as Jesus was accused and categorized. Isaiah 53:12 declares that Jesus was **“ ... numbered with the transgressors,..”** He was mocked, laughed on and they spat on his face.

C- Disturbances of plans and careers: When Jesus arrested, sure lot of things were interrupted and much turmoil was in the life of His disciples. When you are get trespassed and harmed there are many things of yours might suffer; your plans, finances, schedules, work, relationship, family, etc.

D- Pain and body injuries: Jesus was beaten, flogged, carried his cross on his back, hurt by the crown of thorns, his hands and feet were pierced and was hung on the cross for three hours before he died. Those who hurt you may cause you illnesses or body injuries.

In spite of all these bad effects forgiveness has healing effect on your life and makes you whole and gives you relieve. As you practice forgiveness in dealing with the enemy attacks you will gain the following;

1- You will be lifted up and what will be in your mind is the same of God's mind and thought: As Jesus was lifted up when he humbled Himself and accepted to suffer and die on the cross you will be having clear mind and the same thoughts of God. *"5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name."* (Philippians 2:5-9) As you forgive you will be lifted to a heavenly way of thinking and you will be seeing things in the same way as God and Christ see them; *Ephesians 2:6* declares to us the following *"And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus."*

2- Your path and plans will be replaced with heavenly paths and plans: As you forgive those who had hurt you and had harmed you, God will lift you up and open your eyes and mind to see the new path that He had placed you in. After Jesus died on the cross, He was buried, rose from the dead and ascended to heaven to be seated on the right hand of God the Father. Therefore, *"If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection."* (Romans 6:5)

3- As you forgive God will do things beyond your thoughts or sights: When Jesus was hang on the cross, at that moment after crucifixion when he forgave those people who harmed him the situation was complicated from all aspects, but the Lord worked it out that all things went well in accordance to God's will and plan. You might be passing through a complicated situation that beyond what you can bear or fix, but as you release your forgiveness to those who hurt you, the Lord God will work it for your good, *"However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him."* (1Corinthians 2:9)

My dear and beloved: Forgiveness means and requires the followings:

- A- Humility.
- B- Fully surrender to God by giving up your own will and plan.
- C- Loving God.
- D- Fully trusting God.
- E- Willingness to suffer for God's sake.
- F- Forgetting what is behind so you can go freely with what God had prepared for you as Paul said, *"But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead."* (Philippians 2:13b) Do the same as you agree to pray.

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My Prayer: *Father God I come before you in the name of Jesus who died on the Cross for my sins and rose from the dead to give me eternal life. Lord I commit myself to abide with your word in doing your will. Lord I forgive those who hurt me and did me wrong _____ . Lord they did not know what they were doing. Lord helps me to forget the past events and open my eyes to see the path that you had opened to me to pursue. Lord I thank you for restoring me and adding me blessings and joy. This is my prayer and song of praise in Jesus name, Amen.*

Jesus christ



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"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

(Colossians 3:13)

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