FORGIVENESS CASE STUDY

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I Grew up in the church all my life and said the Lord's prayer, but I never realized that there was a condition attached to my asking for and receiving forgiveness; I MUST forgive those who trespass against me. Jesus wasn't asking us; He was telling us if "we forgive men when they sin against you, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you." But our Heavenly Father will not forgive us if we don't forgive (Matthew 6:12, 14 & 15).

We, the body of Christ, have a model to follow, Jesus! On the cross, beaten, battered, spat on, pierced, and wearing a crown of thorns on His head, Jesus looked down from the cross and said, "Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). Jesus knew we were unaware of our sins and needed forgiveness and he willingly gave it to us despite His pain and ultimately death.

Proverbs 19:11b says, "It is to his glory to overlook an offense and Ephesians 4:32 "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave us," yet we harden our hearts to the point where we become angry, "sarcastic, passive-aggressive, numb, depressed, and apathetic"[1] rather than forgive, even though, Jesus said, "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him so that your Father in Heaven may forgive you your sins" (Mark 21:25).

I have been a transgressor of unforgiveness for a long time, and God has been dealing with me concerning it, but I had a tough time overcoming the obstacles. My anger came from hurt by people I loved and respected, and I allowed the hurt to turn into anger, gaining roots of bitterness and unforgiveness. I was so wrapped up in the chaotic and abusive damage that I shut down emotionally.[2] The anger had festered for so many years I had become numb. It didn't

[1] Walborn, Wanda, Why Am I So Angry, AllianceLife, 2018, p. 25
[2] Ibid, p. 25

bother me if anyone stayed or left my life. I was a one-person army fighting for survival, but God kept putting me in situations with difficult people, and they would hurt me, and He kept saying, "Stay where I have placed you, and grow. I couldn't see how I would grow, so I would say, "God, these people don't like me. They don't want me here, why do You want me here" only to hear Him tell me, “If you don't stay where I have planted you, you will not be prepared for where I want to take you." I didn't see my offenders as tools God was using for my growth, or understand that until I exercised self-control, did not feed my frustration, and learned to forgive; I have not risen to where He could use me. "Our knowledge fills only a teacup when there is a giant swimming pool of unknowns awaiting discovery."[3] I was grieving the Holy Spirit and hindering His work through me with my lack of compassion, the same grace I wanted from God I was unwilling to give.

How can I reflect Christ's righteousness or say I love God, who I cannot see, and be unloving and unforgiving to those I can see? As Jesus said, I must do the work my Father sent me to do (John 9:4), so must I. I must reflect Christ and conduct myself by His moral standards, living in an exemplary manner. How could God use someone like me, holding on to resentment, which will eventually lead to depression, psychological distress, and physical illness? He can't. We would make a mess. When we forgive, we set ourselves free from the bondage that keeps us hostage, to the past, relieving our bodies from the tension that comes with unforgiveness. Forgiveness is critical to “our health, families, communities, and nations."[4] Joseph's path to the palace was paved with betrayal, injustice, and disappointment, but he took it all, remained righteous, and God used the painful circumstances to get him to his destiny. God will turn pain into purpose and get us to our destiny when we let go of anger and unforgiveness.

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[3] Worthington, Jr., Everett L., The New Science of Forgiveness, 2004, p. 2, https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the_new_science_of forgiveness. Accessed 03/28/22.
[4] Abid, p 8

Freely we receive, freely we give" (Luke 9:2). As Jesus selflessly paid the ultimate price for our forgiveness with His life, so must we forgive those who trespass against us. The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step, and I have taken steps to my healing.

Bibliography

Walborn, Wanda, Why Am I So Angry, AllianceLife, 2018, p. 25

Worthington, Jr., Everett L., The New Science of Forgiveness, 2004, p. 2, https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the_new_science_of forgiveness. Accessed 03/28/22.