

***Fanning it into Flame***  
**Sunday, December 26, 2010**  
**Forgiveness (part 3)**

I have preached on forgiveness many times, but it took this three week series to reveal the depth of this message. It is at the heart of the Gospel. God demonstrated his love for us by forgiving us. He revealed his grace. He revealed our hope. In it he also shared his nature by giving us the power to forgive. He wants us to be just like him. **John 20:21-23** *Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! **As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.**" 22 And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 **If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.**"* (NIV)

This third message keys in on a very important aspect, namely, how do you keep that forgiving mindset when the memory of the offense returns? While 1 Corinthians 13 tells us that love keeps no record of wrongs, we don't get amnesia. The enemy is also right there to remind us of the past. He is called the accuser of the brethren. He not only wants you to remember, he wants you to feel the passion of the offense as though it's taking place again. Our memories can be so vivid and the pain relived.

Strongholds need to be broken and the way to do that is to create a positive one in its place. While our tendency is to never want to think about the demonic realm, especially the thought of it having an influence on us, we certainly don't want to ignore the ramifications of not taking necessary precautions. Jesus gives a teaching that I would like to borrow from to illustrate the need to fill that wounded area of the heart in order to protect it from further wounding.

**Matthew 12:43-45** *"When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. 44 Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. 45 Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation."* (NIV)

The truth is that when we do not forgive we actually become fertile ground for the enemy's influence, yet when we forgive we are acting the way God does and come under his.

**Ephesians 4:22-32**

22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, **to put off your old self**, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; **23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.** 25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. 26 **"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold. 28 He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.** 29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30 **And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God**, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 **Get rid of all bitterness**, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 **Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.** (NIV *emphasis mine*) The Apostle Paul gives us a great principle to live by. It is not enough to just stop stealing, the former thief must now work to share with those in need. Let's borrow from this as well and apply it to our wounded hearts as Paul does in verse 32. It's not enough to just forgive. We must now develop a stronghold of kindness and compassion to replace that area that has been vacated. Look for opportunities to show the grace of God and his loving kindness. As we do that, the enemy has nowhere to land his assaults. If we take these steps, God will meet us there and bring it to fruition. (I have included an additional page with some recap notes. God bless!)

### Addendum: Recap notes

\*Sometimes people don't forgive because they feel justice would not be served. "*This person wounded me and they need to pay.*" We use terms like, "You owe me an apology." They are indebted to us and we don't want to let it go until we get paid.

\*Some people use unforgiveness as a boundary to stay separated from the offender. They can't imagine reconciliation and do not want it to happen. While forgiveness is essential for reconciliation to take place, reconciliation is not essential for forgiveness to take place. When a person still represents a threat of further hurt, it is right to establish boundaries. When trust has been broken, as in the violation of a relationship, forgiveness does not mean that trust is automatically reestablished. Trust must be earned. That can take time. The key is that they don't owe you for the offense. You released them from their debt to you.

\*The problem is that our unforgiveness binds us up in the process. Unforgiveness builds a wall around you that while locking the other person out, has locked you in. This wall also keeps God out. It is a stronghold.

\*If you can't forgive someone, you have to ask yourself the question, "Have I been forgiven for my sins by God?" If you have, then you no longer have a right to say that you can't forgive.

\*Rodney Hogue says that forgiveness starts by acknowledging that an offense has taken place and not acting as though it doesn't bother you. Own up to the fact that you are offended.

\*One person didn't want to forgive someone who had sexually abused her because she thought that it would mean that she would have to live her life in such a way as if the action had never taken place. Rodney goes on to say: *Forgiveness doesn't remove or delete offenses from our lives. Forgiveness doesn't mean that you go into denial and forget this ever happened to you. It isn't that you are somehow wiping this event from your life, glossing over the wrongs others did, nor developing a memory lapse of the pain you have suffered. Forgiveness will not erase your memory clean. What forgiveness does is to remove the power of that memory over your life.*"

\*There are great benefits to you for walking in forgiveness. It frees you to walk in the destiny God has for you while unforgiveness hinders you. Consider Joseph. God has a divine destiny for him and yet time and time again he was wounded. First his brothers sell him as a slave because of their jealousy of him. When he gets to Egypt he gains favor with one of their leaders and then gets betrayed by his wife and is thrown into jail. In jail he befriends two inmates who were to help him when they got out only to find that they forgot about him and he spent two more years in jail. When his brothers arrive, he does not require a pound of flesh, but demonstrates love and forgiveness and ends up fulfilling his divine destiny.

\*Replace the stronghold of unforgiveness with a stronghold of compassion. Just as the thief must now work to help those in need, we must show acts of kindness, mercy, and compassion to replace the bitter place that our unforgiveness produced. In doing so, the enemy will have no fertile ground to plant his seeds of hatred.