

The Amazing Power of Forgiveness

As we approach the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread, we are reminded once again of the imperative need to look at ourselves, to examine ourselves, and to see whether or not we are truly “in the faith” (II Corinthians. 13:5), meaning that we must evaluate whether Christ is truly living within us. We know that being “in the faith”, having Christ live within us, will manifest itself in our having love one to another.

John 13:34:35. *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

Not only that, but we will love our neighbors as ourselves, and we will even love our enemies!

Matthew 19:16-19. *“Now behold, one came and said to Him, ‘Good teacher what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?’ So He said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.’ He said to Him, ‘Which ones?’ Jesus said, ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ‘You shall not steal.’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”*



Matthew 5:43-45. *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 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, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”*

The Way of Forgiveness

These things we know to be true, but there is an essential corollary that goes along with the way of love, and that is the *way of forgiveness*. Without forgiveness you will be eaten alive by your own emotions, and will find yourself unable to live the life of Christ dwelling in you: *you will be unable to love!*

At this Passover time we need to really zero in on this way of forgiveness, because it has such a profound effect on our lives, and God has a *lot* to say about it. There is probably no better place to start than in the model prayer in Matthew 6:12-15.

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. 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.”

If Christ says that He will not forgive you of your sins if you will not forgive others of their sins against you, then He is saying you will not be in the resurrection if you will not forgive: it is just that important! Of course,



we can forgive others through the love God has placed within us ... and we will forgive others; God will see to it that we will.

Matthew 18:21-22. *“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.’”*

Let us look a bit more at this concept of forgiveness to get a better handle on it. The quotation from Matthew 18:21-22 is expounded upon more broadly in Luke 17:1-4.

“Then He said to the disciples, ‘It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom

they do come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him.”

Does this mean that if someone has committed an offense against you that you should not forgive him? Is it even possible for you to forgive someone who has not repented? The way Christ is expressing things here shows that ***forgiveness is a contract*** between you and the offending party: the offender asks for forgiveness and you forgive. **THAT IS THE VERY SAME CONTRACT THAT GOD MADE WITH EACH ONE OF US WHEN HE CALLED AND CHOSE US, THAT WE ADMITTED OUR SINS TO HIM — WE REPENTED — AND THEN, AT BAPTISM AND THE LAYING ON OF HANDS, WE RECEIVED THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHICH CARRIES WITH IT THE PROMISE OF ETERNAL LIFE!**

Of course, that price for our sins was paid by the crucifixion of the perfect sinless One: His spilled blood covers our sins, and then His resurrection gives us life eternal.

Revelation 1:5. *“... and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,”*

Romans 4:6-7. *“Just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works, saying, “Blessed are those whose lawless*

deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin."

Hebrews 9:11-14. *"But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"*

Do not we then, like Jesus Christ, as we have been washed clean of our sins, also forgive others through our own spilled blood, as it were? After all, are not we also "crucified with Christ", and "partake of His sufferings"?

Galatians 2:20. *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."*

II Corinthians 1:3-5. *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ."*

Philippians 3:9-10. *"... and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death."*

Those Who Do Not Repent — the Story of Adolph Coors IV

What about those people that have sinned against us and do not ask for forgiveness, especially those who are in the world and have no concept of God's truth? Do we continue to hate them and hold grudges, and allow a root of bitterness to enter in that will eventually tear our lives apart? No, we do not, for God has a remedy for that situation as well. He says we need to ask *Him* to forgive the guilty party. When



Christ was hanging on the stake, He said,

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g i v e
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not know what they do.' And they divided His garments and cast lots."

For a true-life story revealing the power of forgiveness, note the story below of Adolph Coors IV of the well-known Coors Brewery in Golden, Colorado. His experiences with forgiveness after the murder of his father are priceless.

"We had an ideal family and were living

the American Dream,” remembers Adolph Coors IV. “We had the home in the mountains, wealth, social success, and parents who loved us and took time to let us know their love. My life was almost everything a boy could want. Then, on February 9, 1960, our world was ripped apart.” That morning Adolph Herman Joseph Coors III left his mountain ranch at the usual 7:30 a.m. It was only 12 miles from the ranch to the Coors Brewery in Golden, Colorado, and a short pleasant drive on a crisp winter morning. He would be early for work — as usual.

But on that day, Adolph Coors III was kidnapped and held for ransom. “Seven months later my dad’s remains were found in a garbage dump near Denver,” recalls Adolph Coors IV. He had been shot to death and his head had been severed from his body. Joseph Corbett was arrested for the crime, and Corbett was convicted of murder; he was sentenced to life in prison as punishment for his crime. Some thought he deserved the death penalty and that life in prison was not punishment enough. Prison, however, is not only a place of punishment. Incarcerating offenders also keeps them away from the general public and prevents them from doing further harm to law abiding citizens.

Even so, one does not have to be behind bars to be imprisoned. Adolph Coors IV was just fifteen years old when his father was slain. He not only lost his father but his best friend. That short time spent with his father was bittersweet. And for that reason, young Coors hated Joseph Corbett for many years. In fact, for the next 17 years it was as if every member of the family had been kidnapped, shot, mangled, and trashed just as their father. There seemed to be no way out. His life went on. He had married BJ, but still he trudged through each day. Adolph later said, “In the meantime my family had fallen into a deep hole of hate. Mother especially allowed hatred for Joseph Corbett to consume her life. In

that hatred she turned to the only crutch she knew: alcohol.”

Adolph’s marriage to BJ began to crumble. “Grief builds walls between people,” he went on to say. “We just do not know what to say to people who are hurting, and their grief keeps them from letting us know as well. So we all sat around allowing an incredible emptiness to grow inside us.... We spent money we didn’t have to buy things we didn’t need to impress people we couldn’t stand,” he said. “And I was still a tragically insecure person screaming for someone to please notice me, please accept me.”

“When our life had become a total shambles,” remembers Adolph and BJ, “Lowell Sun, a vice president of the brewery, and his wife Vera, came to our lakeside home and told us about the claims of Jesus Christ. They told us about the God-shaped vacuum all of us have in our lives and showed us how to allow a relationship with Christ to fill that vacuum.” BJ listened to their words. Adolph did not. He left BJ and moved out of the house.

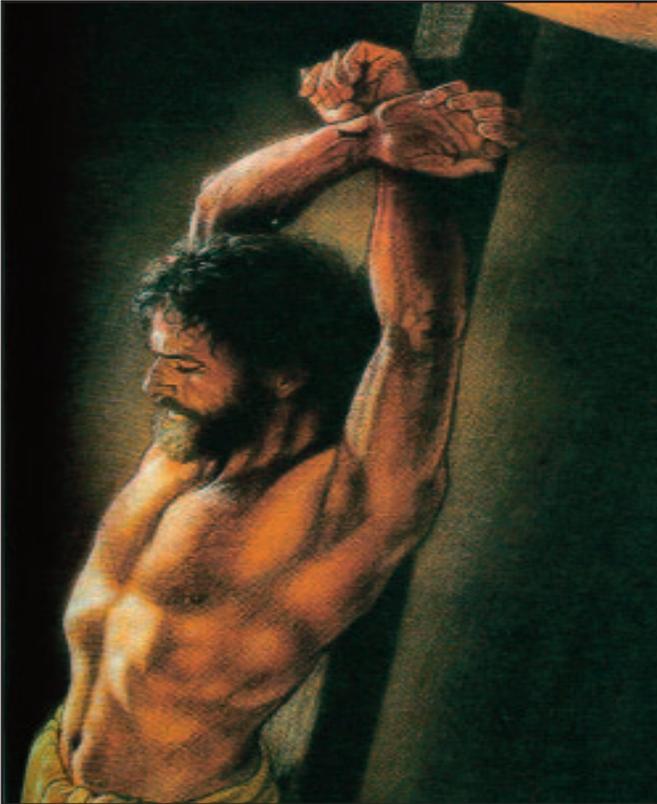
But the Holy Spirit was working within his heart. Adolph recalled, “It took me six weeks of painful loneliness before I finally gave in. I called BJ and asked her if I could come home. I decided to do myself a favor and love my wife.”

Then, in the spring of 1975, the Holy Spirit opened up his heart. Adolph said, “Instantly He filled my void with a love that no person or possession had been able to fill. For the first time in my life I had purpose and a destiny.... ***From long exposure I had learned that hatred hurts the hater even more than the one being hated.***”

Even so, resentment seethed within him and hindered his growth in faith. He prayed to God for help because he realized how his hatred for Corbett was alienating him from God and other persons. So, in 1977, Adolph Coors IV went to the Colorado State penitentiary. He visited the

maximum security unit of Colorado's Canon City penitentiary and tried to talk with Corbett.

Corbett refused to see him. Coors left a



Bible inscribed with this message: "I'm here to see you today and I'm sorry that we could not meet. As a Christian I am summoned by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, to forgive. I do forgive you, and I ask you to forgive me for the hatred I've held in my heart for you." It took great courage for Adolph to say those words of forgiveness. In fact it is not easy for anyone to say them. But it is even more difficult to really mean them from your heart.

What most people do not under-

stand is that an unwillingness to forgive hurts only the one who refuses to forgive. You may think you are hurting those who have hurt you, but you wind up only hurting yourselves. You lock up your heart behind bars and do not allow anyone in or any kind words out. When you do not forgive those who sin against you, you are giving them control over your emotions, your decisions, and your actions. They now run your lives. They become your lords, whom you serve with your grudges, hostility, and hatred. An unforgiving attitude is a spiritual cancer that eats away at your bones, demeaning you, robbing you of vitality and joy, driving you to say and do things that are beneath your dignity as God's children.

Let Us Forgive!

So what about each of us. As we approach the Passover season and examine ourselves, are we truly "in the faith"? Do we harbor any grudges against anyone, which is the same as saying we are unforgiving towards that person? If we do harbor unforgiveness we are only hurting ourselves, and those around us who must absorb the pain of our own pain. Let's forgive others by going to that person who has sinned against us and asking for forgiveness, or, if that is not possible, then asking the Father to forgive the person. That will take a considerable load off of our shoulders, and free us from the prison of captivity that unforgiveness grants.

