



## Restoration through Forgiveness: Freedom through Releasing Others!

January 26, 2020

### **Ephesians 4:17-32 (Emphasis on vv31-32)**

In the first two messages of this series, we attempted to demonstrate that Restoration is the Heart of God...that God is Able to renew, revive, and restore His people! Last week, we looked at the power of Repentance in the book of Jonah (3:1-10) where all of Ninevah repented at the preaching of Jonah...

1. All of Nineveh believed God! (v5)
2. A citywide fast was proclaimed! (v5)
3. Ninevites of every socio-economic status put on sackcloth and mourned, presumably over their wickedness and known cruelty. (v5)
4. This heart of repentance was exemplified by the king himself who arose from his throne, took off his royal robes, and dressed in mourning attire, and sat in ashes. (v6)
5. The entire Assyria was compelled by royal decree to repent and cry out "mightily unto God," turn from evil way and violence" in the hope that God might "turn and repent" and be merciful.

We said, "Jonah's prophetic message could not be more different that our modern approach at evangelism and attempts at revival. I think most of the West would dismiss a modern Jonah out of hand, labeling him judgmental, insensitive, archaic, unloving, and mean-spirited."

Friends, we saw via the Scriptures that our God loves repentant, broken, and contrite hearts!

- ***Psalms 34:18 (KJV)*** *The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*
- ***Psalms 51:17 (KJV)*** *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*
- ***Isaiah 66:2 (KJV)*** *For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.*
- ***Matthew 5:3 (KJV)*** *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Oh that we might preach repentance and live as contrite people! So much restoration would occur so quickly with such humility!

*Today, we tackle the other side of the coin: Forgiveness.*

### **Like Repentance, Forgiveness is also the in the heart of God towards His children:**

- ***Jeremiah 33:6-8 (KJV)*** *Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth. 7 And I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them, as at the first. 8 And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me.*

- **Isaiah 43:25 (KJV)** *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.*
- **Isaiah 44:21-23 (KJV)** *Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. 22 I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. 23 Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.*
- **Psalms 103:8-14 (KJV)** *The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. 9 He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger forever. 10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. 11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. 12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. 13 Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. 14 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.*
- **1 John 1:9 (KJV)** *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

### **Our LORD desires us to forgive others too!**

- **Matthew 6:14-15 (KJV)** *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*
- **Colossians 3:12-13 (KJV)** *Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; 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.*

The Holy Spirit even instructs us how to treat those we have forgiven:

- **Romans 12:17-21 (KJV)** *Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. 18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. 20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. 21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

### **Thoughts on the Text:**

Ephesians is a masterpiece wrought by the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul. It is marvelously laid out to convince the believer of the wonder of the new life we have in Christ (Eph 4:24)!

As we have said previously:

As we look at chapter four verse one, we see a major break in thought: “I therefore.” This is like saying, “Based on all I’ve shared with you up to this point”, or “consequently” or “hence,” “accordingly,” etc.

Remember our proposition that Ephesians is evenly divided between **indicatives** (or things that are, chps. 1-3) and **imperatives** (things that must be done, chps. 4-6). In other words, the first three chapters give us the motivation to obey the last three chapters. Remember, because of what Christ has done:

- We are “blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.” (Eph 1:3)
- We were “chosen in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” (Eph 1:4)
- We have been “predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.” (Eph 1:5)
- We have been given “redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace! (Eph 1:7)
- “We have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, that we should be to the praise of his glory!” (Eph 1:11-12)

**Eph 2:4-10** But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, **5** Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) **6** And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: **7** That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. **8** For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: **9** Not of works, lest any man should boast. **10** For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Paul then lays out some of those good works we’ve been created in Christ to accomplish. From our Text:

#### Gospel-based Imperatives (Verses 17-32)

1. We are commanded to walk as believers not unbelievers. We must be aware of how we think, the state of our hearts before God, and of becoming desensitized to sin. (vv17-20)
2. We are commanded to put off our old selves, which means our old ways of living and thinking, and be renewed in the spirit of our minds. We are to “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (vv21-24).
3. We are commanded to stop lying and speak truth to our neighbors. (v25)
4. We are commanded to settle disputes quickly, not letting the sun go down on our wrath, giving no opportunity to the devil. (vv26-27)
5. We are commanded not to steal but instead to work hard and to be generous. (v28)
6. We are commanded to watch the way we talk, allowing nothing corrupt to come out of our mouths. We should use our tongues to edify and for the ministering of grace. (v29)
7. We are commanded not to grieve the Holy Spirit! (v30) Contextually, all the improper actions surrounding this verse grieves the Spirit who dwells within us. He is holy!

8. We are commanded not to allow bitterness and wrath...anger and clamor (shouting at each other) and hatred. Those things must be done away with. (v31)
9. And finally, we are commanded to be kind to one another. We are commanded to be tender-hearted. We are commanded to forgive each other, using God's forgiveness in Christ forgiveness as our model! (v32)

Again in context, all these imperatives are to be followed *in Christ*. If not, the Holy Spirit will be grieved (v30) and much of the beauty we are supposed to add to the world is lost.

I submit that among the most egregious of these offenses is a heart that will not forgive. Why? Because God, in Christ, has forgiven us! A few more thoughts on this...

- Unforgiveness is disobedience. We see forgiving as a choice rather than a command.
- Unforgiveness expresses an unbiblical sense of our own worthiness. At its core, it is prideful.
- Unforgiveness is a "slap in the face." It says to God, "You have forgiven me for countless wickedness and transgressions against your personal holiness, but I will not forgive somethings much less concerning my brother/sister. This is beautifully illustrated in...

**Matthew 18:21-35 (KJV)** *Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? 22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. 23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. 24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. 25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. 26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. 28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. 29 And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. 31 So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. 32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: 33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? 34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. 35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.*

### **Knowing all these things, why is forgiveness so hard then?**

1. **Pride** ("I didn't deserve that!" Oh let us remember Jesus prayed for His murderers forgiveness! Luke 23:34)
2. **Anger** (Sometimes even justified anger!)
3. **Pain** and the **fear** of being hurt again
4. **Time** (the longer it dwells in the heart, the more one can become used to it)

5. Listening to wrong **people** (Gossip, ungodly counsel, etc...sowers of discord, something God hates and calls an abomination! Prov 6:16-19)
6. The desire to **retaliate** by passively hurting the hurter (using unforgiveness to communicate your pain can powerfully appeal to the flesh)
7. **Spiritual** warfare; Satan loves to keep believers bound!

### **Some Possible Consequences of Unforgiveness**

1. Disobedience to God's commands
2. Broken relationships
3. Becoming anger, bitter or jaded
4. Loss of joy
5. Inability to trust
6. Loss of tangible love, community and "one-anothering"
7. More susceptibility to demonic attack and/or the devil's schemes

### **How does the Believer forgive?**

1. By **faith!**
  - Unlike those deceived by worldly philosophies, Christians are not ruled by their feelings. Nor do we need to relive or continually meditate upon painful events in most cases.
  - By faith, we simply release people, freeing them and ourselves in the process!
2. With **love!**
  - We ask the LORD to change our hearts towards an offender that we might truly love them. We ask Him to remind us of our sin and deep need for Him.
  - As we see ourselves in light of His mercy, forgiveness and loving our "enemy" begins to make complete sense!
3. With **words!**
  - When the situation allows and as we heal, we do not keep our forgiveness private. We reengage with the offender, offering kindness and fellowship! True reconciliation! (Note: this assumes the level of offense is reasonably minor. Some situations may require "forgiving from afar.")
4. With **actions!**
  - True forgiveness is akin to biblical love: it doesn't just talk...it acts. (1 John 3:18) Therefore, serving, eating, and worshipping together are signs of such. Talking, sharing, and reconnecting! When at all possible, aim for total restoration!
5. Through continual **prayer!**
  - Again, a Christian's forgiveness is not totally predicated upon emotion. However, those emotions are real. We may still be "offended" but can, with the Holy Spirit's help, choose to walk in love and mercy by faith.
  - Therefore we must stay before God and allow Him to continually heal our hearts!

**A Prayer for CRCC and our families:**

LORD, when you called us to the battlefield...to communicate the whole Gospel, attempt to reform family and uplift biblical manhood and womanhood, to strive to protect and disciple children, live and worship in holiness, build our financial houses for thy glory, and build your church according to the pattern You laid out, we didn't realize how hard it would be.

In a tough battle with the enemy, wounds are real possibilities!

We are asking that You would heal us. Help us to know the power of Your **Restoration**. **Renew** and **Revive** us; You are able! Help us to be a contrite, repentant people. Help us to tremble at Your Word and quickly and completely forgive offenses.

We love You and need You Jesus.

Amen.