

DEALING WITH THE PAST BIBLICALLY

Romans 12:17-21

Our past can be a great blessing to us, but we also need to know how we should deal with our "guilty" past. When we have sinned against or offended another the answer is confession, repentance, and forgiveness.

Matthew 5:21-24.

But what if someone has sinned against us? What if we were the innocent party in it all? Do we have an obligation to resolve the problem? The answer is an unequivocal YES!

Forgiveness is at the very foundation of our Christian faith. Without forgiveness we would not have salvation by faith. Even though forgiveness is at the very center of our faith, it is the one thing we seem to have the most difficulty doing in our daily lives.

Sometimes it seems as if Christians are the most unforgiving people. James said - ***"...My brethren, these things ought not so to be." James 3:10.***

TRANS. SENTENCE:

When studying forgiveness, we first must see that:

I. GOD HAS FORGIVEN US

A. When God Forgave Us Of Our Sins, The Bible Says That He Remembered Them No More.

1. Only God has the ability to take away sins - ***I John 1:9***
2. When He forgives us they are actually removed - ***Psalms 103:12.*** This means they no longer exist.
3. This is why the Jews said that Jesus blasphemed when He said, ***"your sins are forgiven."*** - ***Luke 7:47-50***
4. ***I John 2:12*** - ***"I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake."***

B. We Are Commanded To Forgive One Another.

Ephesians 4:32 - ***"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."***

C. ***Mark 11:25 - 26***

II. WE MUST FORGIVE OTHERS

A. It Is Not An Option.

B. It Is A Command From God.

1. When we forgive others, we don't actually remove the sin like God does, but we choose to no longer remember the sin.
2. This sounds like a fairly easy thing to do, but we have such a hard time doing it!
3. We want to punish those who hurt us – **Romans 12:17**
 - a. Man's heart is sinful, and the first thing that he desires to do is to strike back when he is hurt or violated. (example: someone hits us, cheats us, lies, etc...)
 - (1) **Matthew 5:38-44**
 - (2) **I Thessalonians 5:15**
 - b. Because we think so highly of ourselves, we think we need to re-establish our position.
 - (1) "Who do you think you are talking to?"
 - (2) This is caused by pride that is still left in our hearts.
 - (3) **Romans 12:3**
 - c. We don't have enough faith to let God handle the situation, so we try to handle it ourselves.

C. How Many Times Must We Forgive Someone For Sinning Against Us?

1. Peter asked Jesus the same question, implying that a person only deserved so many chances.
2. What was the reply of Jesus?
3. An infinite number of times! (70x7) - **Matthew 18:21-35**
4. Another good answer could be "you forgive the other person as many times as God has forgiven you."

III. WHAT DOES UNFORGIVENESS DO TO US?

A. It Keeps Us In Bitterness.

1. We keep turning over and over this hurt in our mind, always keeping it fresh; always ready to strike out again. – **Hebrews 12:15 - this verse refers to – Deuteronomy 29:18**,
2. It is a vicious cycle.
3. A bitter person is always angry about something.

B. It Keeps Us In Bondage To Past Mistakes.

1. If we don't forgive, we are always living in some past hurt.
2. We constantly re-live it in our minds.
3. We never seem to get free from the anger, even when we want to.

C. It Keeps Us In Guilt.

1. A Christian who lives in the bondage of unforgiveness is also living in guilt.
2. He knows that he must forgive, but he also knows that he can't.
3. He carries this weight around with him, not being able to get rid of it.

D. It Is A Cause Of Personal Problems.

1. Physical (such as ulcers).
2. Mental (sustained anger will cause you to become mentally sick).
3. And spiritual sickness (unforgiveness will cause you to drift away from God).

IV. HOW DO WE FORGIVE SOMEONE THAT HURTS US SO BAD?

A. We Stop Thinking Of Those Who Hurt Us As Enemies, And We Start To Honestly Seek God For Their Good – **Romans 12:20.**

1. Quit being the victim! – **Acts 7:54-60; Genesis 50:15-21.**
2. We need to earnestly pray for blessings in their lives – **II Timothy 4:14**
3. It is very difficult to be angry or unforgiving towards someone whom you are earnestly praying for!

B. We Look To God As Our Example.

1. Could you forgive someone who killed your only son? God did.
2. He does not allow the sin to be remembered anymore.

C. We Look To Jesus As Our Example.

1. What did Jesus say while he was hanging on the Cross?
2. While He was experiencing the worst pain a person could experience?
3. While the blood was dripping from His hands, and His flesh was tearing at the nails?
4. He said, **"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."** – **Luke 23:33-38**
 - a. If Jesus could forgive those who were killing Him, we must forgive those who have hurt us.
 - b. It was our sins that nailed Him to that tree: your sins and mine.

CONCLUSION:

We serve a forgiving God. And the root of His love is forgiveness.

How we view forgiveness will affect our relationship with Him, and with those around us.

If we wish to be spiritually healthy, if we wish to be free of condemnation, then we must forgive those who hurt us.