

Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. (2 Corinthians 6:2 ESV)

3RD FEBRUARY 2012

FORGIVENESS

LUKE 23:34

[Dr. John Joseph

Luke 23:34

But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves. (Luke 23:34 NASB)

On hearing about forgiveness, most people would close their heart to it simply because they feel they have already visited that word many times. But forgiveness is not something that visits us just once in a lifetime. As long as we are relating to people on a daily basis, there will be an ongoing opportunity for us to get hurt with someone. Even though we may not want to get hurt, we end up getting hurt. Parents do not intend to hurt their children nor do the children intend to hurt their parents, but people end up hurting each other. This is because people have expectations from one another. We expect people to do what we want at that particular time. We expect people to behave maturely, walk in humility etc. When we are hurt by someone, we expect that person to understand why we are not forgiving. We show people that we are hurt by avoiding them, by getting back at them or by keeping them at a distance. We do not need to honour everybody because they deserve honour, but being honourable is a character that we need to cultivate in ourselves. It means, **the way someone else behaves is not going to determine what we are.** Someone being angry at us is not going to determine who we are.

Whenever people hated Him or loved Him, Jesus was the same. When the crowds were following Him and when the crowds were stoning Him, He was Jesus. **He never allowed others to determine how He behaved.** Jesus forgave when He was crucified because He is love. Love is not a feeling, neither is forgiveness a feeling. If you feel love, you will later run out of love. God never said that He feels love. God is love. That is why God never stops loving. All the days, He is love. Therefore, when we come to the presence of God and look at the Saviour on the cross, His broken body and blood, we see that He has not changed after two thousand years. He cannot change because He is love. You do not fall out of love, you fall out of lust.

Romans 5:5

and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. (Romans 5:5 NASB)

This means love is something that God pours into our hearts and is not something which we fall into and fall out of. Love is not a feeling. What we fall into and fall out of is feeling. But **what we choose to walk in, is love. We have that love because of the Holy Spirit who pours that love into our hearts.** The love of God is poured out into our hearts. Therefore, we may not like someone, but **we have no choice than to love because God is love and He dwells inside of us.** We will not be able to get around forgiveness unless we have an exposure to God's love. Those who are not exposed to God's love, struggles with forgiveness. Married couples usually have more issues in their relationships because they have high expectations. When you have high expectations, be assured that people will let you down somewhere. When they let you down, it is a time for you to say that it is God's moment for you, that is, the moment to say that you forgive them and the opportunity to reveal His love through your heart. **We need God's love in our hearts to forgive someone.**

Peter swore to Jesus that no matter whatever happens, whoever leaves Jesus, he would never leave Him. But he denies Jesus. What expectation should Jesus have from us who have told Him that wherever He leads, we would follow and whatever He tells, we would do. But what would have Jesus thought about Peter's and our behaviours. Jesus would not allow someone else's behaviour to change His nature. **He is not going to allow our failures to change His ability to forgive. No matter what we have been through or how much we have messed up, He is not going to stop being forgiving.** He is not going to stop being love simply because we have stopped loving.

Psalm 130:4

But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared. (Psalms 130:4 NASB)

Why should we fear God? **We should fear Him because with Him there is forgiveness.** We need to fear God because He is able to forgive us. We cannot take God's forgiveness away from God's nature of love. If God is love then He will pour that love into our hearts. Though it is Peter who promised Jesus that he would never leave Him, we see that it was Jesus who went after Peter when he went back to fishing. Some of us are like Peter. Before we think, we swear that we would never fail Him. The moment we swear like that, our standard is our own righteousness. The problem with our relationship is that we think we are better than others until someone else stands up and tells us that they are better than us. **When we judge others, we judge them by their actions. But we expect people to judge us for our intentions. Forgiveness is not because of action or intention; forgiveness is because God is love.**

Colossians 3:12,13,14

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. (Colossians 3:12-14 NASB)

The Bible here asks us to put on compassionate hearts. It is something that God wants us to put on. Unless you have kindness, humility, meekness and patience, you cannot have what it says next. That is, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another and forgiving as Christ forgave. And above all these things we need to put on love. Our problem with forgiveness is, the issue of not confronting the love of God. Forgiveness is not something that happens once in a lifetime. Everyday we are confronted with one more time of forgiving someone, because every day we have expectations. The day we let go of our expectations, we will stop getting hurt. People struggle to forgive because unforgiveness gives a false sense of control. It allows you to feel that you are in control of the situation. **Bitterness is a poison you drink for someone else's mistake.** Forgiveness must be confronted. **God says that with Him there is forgiveness.** To fear God does not mean to be afraid of God. Fear of God is actually birthed out of love. The ones who have not seen the foundation of the basics of love are the ones who do not know what it means to reverentially fear God. The kind of people who have hurt you are the ones to whom God wants to send you back to be a healing to. The very people who have hurt you are the ones God has got to plan for your life. You will never really know how to serve and love them until you have been hurt, rejected or heart broken by them, and forgiveness is a daily choice. The ones who cannot forgive are those have not confronted the mercy of God. The bible says to be careful of any root of bitterness because that can cause trouble. Many people are angry because of bitterness in their hearts.

We do not forgive someone because they deserve forgiveness. **We forgive because of who we are, as we are people who have confronted the cross of Jesus.** We have seen the crucified Jesus asking the Father to forgive them. One of the secrets of walking with God is humility. We may also be humiliated many times. The battle is won at our personal times with God. David won Goliath in the wilderness with the lion and the bear. When you forgive people, others will see and honour you. God is calling us to a place of forgiveness. Victory over people's offences is highly connected to what we are practicing every day. What we practice is what is going to bless us. Joseph was betrayed for thirteen years but he forgave because he knew that it was for the salvation of Israel. Jesus was crucified, but He forgave because He knew that it was for the salvation of the whole world. We need to practice forgiveness. All our lives we need to constantly work on it because all our lives we are going to be hurt by different people.

Forgiveness is not an emotion, but it is a revelation of God's mercy. There may be people in your lives who have hurt you. It is like a sword in your heart. But you need to release it to God. We need to forgive because we have seen the cross. **We need to forgive because we have seen how Jesus forgave us on the cross.**

[Benja Paul]