

The Power of Forgiveness

This is POWER MONTH:

First week - Power of the Resurrection – His triumph is our triumph

Last week - Power of the Cross – His death is our death

This week - Power of Forgiveness – I am forgiven – I have to forgive

Next week - Power of the Blood – What's blood got to do with it?

The Church?

I want to start this week with a couple verses on Freedom.

■ Gal. 5:1 It is for **freedom** that Christ has set us free.

■ John 8:36 **So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.** (Free as a matter of fact. Free in reality. Truly Free)

So the purpose of the Work of Christ, the Cross, the resurrection, in our lives is all included in this verse that the Goal of heaven is our freedom – physically, mentally, spiritually, emotionally. Every area.

But where I felt like we needed to go this week is that some of our FREEDOM and RELEASE is based on what we do with the Power of Forgiveness we have received.

■ 1John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will **forgive** us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

■ 1John 2:12 I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have been **forgiven** on account of his name.

So this is the process and we have talked about this. Once my sins have been paid for by the body and blood of Jesus, I can be forgiven. Before God I am clean – righteous. My Old Life is nailed to the cross and comes no further.

HOWEVER, being forgiven by God is not the only key to complete and lasting freedom!

I want to show you some spiritual truth you may not be aware of....

■ John 20:23 **If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."**

WHAT? READ IT AGAIN!! HOW CAN THAT BE?

What does this mean when it says if I (you) do not forgive them, then they are not forgiven?

Here is what that means – Heaven, God, can forgive them. You have no eternal power over who God does or does not forgive. So this is not talking about their eternal state before God.

However, if you DO NOT release them, release them from whatever wrong, hurt, or sin against YOU – then the POWER of that sin continues to have life! Our unforgiveness allows that sin to continue to have power.

The King James version says ‘we retain them in their sin.’

This works at a number of levels, none of which bring freedom! Most of these will cost us.

■ **Heb. 12:15** *“See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled”*

Roots bear fruit! It is a medical fact that arthritis, some cancers, even heart disease can be linked unhealthy emotional environments. When people are bitter & angry because of unforgiveness it has physical consequences. Many times if you are praying for someone who is not getting there healing you will find that they have someone or something in their life they have not forgiven. And it keeps them from getting their healing or freedom.

Perhaps you have heard the quote ‘Unforgiveness is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.’

How can that be? When we retain them in their sin, their sin continues to infect us.

In February we said “You become like the one you love?”

But I am telling you today that ‘You also become like the one you hate.’

Through unforgiveness, bitterness, anger, hatred, we remain BOUND to the SIN, bound to the hurt, bound to the SINNER.

■ 90% of the child molesters in prison were molested as children. They became the very thing they hated.

■ **Rom. 7:24** O wretched man that I am! who shall **deliver me** from the body of this death?

In Bible times, if you killed someone, they would chain you to their dead body and throw you in the dungeon. As the ‘body of death’ decayed and died, it’s disease became your disease. That is what Paul is writing about. If you do not LET IT GO, NO MATTER HOW BAD IT IS – WHAT IT IS – Money, stuff, something personal, whatever – It will control you to some degree.

In Matthew 18, Jesus tells the story of an individual that owed a lot of money. NIV says 10,000 bags of Gold! He begged for pity and the lender forgave him his BANKRUPTCY! This same man, now forgiven, met a man who owed him 100 silver coins and demanded payment. He put him in prison over the debt. When the Master who forgave the original debt found out he said this:

■ **Matt. 18:34** In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

Matt. 18:35 “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

You get the point here. Our debts come back on us through unforgiveness. We are **TORMENTED** mentally, emotionally, spiritually. The sins of someone else continue to control us.

They used to capture monkeys by placing a peanut in a jar with a very small opening. The monkey could get his hand in the jar to get the peanut, but once it was clinched in his fist, he could not get his hand out. He would refuse to let go of the peanut and eventually it cost him his freedom and perhaps his life.

■ The roots of unforgiveness and bitterness have great power.

The power of forgiveness is you are free, debt free, released, BUT if you don't do the same for others, then that **POWER** is reversed and becomes a prison for our souls!!

You have some pretty incredible scriptural examples:

■ **II Sam 13 David's children.** Absalom's had a sister, Tamar. Her half brother Amnon was love sick over Tamar. She was a maiden, a virgin and Amon pretended he was sick and when she came to take care of him he raped her. In **verse 22 it says** Absalom hated Amon because he had raped his sister. Absalom carried this for two years, then devised a plan and ventually killed Amnon. But that was not the end. Absalom continued to carry that hatred and bitterness until he became king years later. In **16:20-23**, Absalom committed incest with his father's wives in public from the palace roof. All because of bitterness.

Making Vows does pretty much the same thing as unforgiveness. 'I won't be like my dad....like my mom. I won't do what he did or do what she did. I won't treat my kids that way. I won't act that way.' That vow becomes a tether line that keeps you connected and the empowers the weakness, the sin, the failure in the other person to have power in your life!

■ **The Answer to all of this?**

■ **Luke 6:37** Forgive and you will be forgiven... Release them and you will be released.

■ The first thing to do is get quiet and pray.

■ Ask the Lord if there is anything or anyone you have not held something against. Any vow you have made.

■ As the Lord reminds you, then you repent and ask forgiveness for NOT forgiving even though you have been forgiven.

■ Ask forgiveness for making vows. Both of these keep your hands on the situation. If you hand is on it, God's hand is not! He will not take hold of what you continue to hold on to.

■ To Release means to let it go.

■ To Forgive means to send it away.

Emotions don't make decisions. Decisions make emotions.

■ You don't have to feel like it. You don't even have to like it.

■ It is a step of faith, an act of faith. (Feelings will follow.)

It is taking your hands and heart OFF of the EVENT and allowing God to have it!

That releases Him to work in the other persons life, and it allows true freedom to begin to work in yours.

Whoever did whatever to you, probably never heard a message like this and was probably carrying something from their life, or parents, or something someone had done to them. Hurting people hurt people. Even people they love.

The only way for you to be free is to let them go through forgiveness.

You may need to go and tell that person you forgive them. And tell them why. You don't always have to do that, but that can bring real healing to both you and the person if that is what the Lord leads you to do.

■ The Power of Forgiveness is that it has the ability to bring REAL freedom in our lives. But there is a responsibility we have to let the forgiveness given to us be released to others that may 'owe us some debt.' It is not easy. But it is what works! That is where the real Power Comes in!