

FACING THE FUTURE WITH FREEDOM

Philippians 3:13-14

What is there in your mind that you would like to forget? While we walk into a new year, the reality is, as we walk into this new year, we may find ourselves walking into it with new hurts, fresh pains, and wounds that have been opened afresh and anew. Simply because the calendar rolls from one year to the next, and begins with a brand new day, and a brand new month, it doesn't mean that we are facing this new year with freshness and freedom.

Paul knew well what it was to be hurt and to be wounded emotionally, relationally, and spiritually. He knew what it was to feel the pain of others turn against him in betrayal. The reality is, we all know what it is to be hurt. Maybe you find yourself here today, being hurt over the holidays by friends around you or even family.

When you and I get hurt and begin to hold a grudge, there begins a death process. A death in relationships. There is a death toward others in relationship, and a death toward the Father in fellowship. Many saints of God feel that God has abandoned them, while the real problem is that there is a failure to deal with the past sins.

Paul's mind was constantly plagued by his past life. The devil did his best to use his past life against him. I'm sure the devil whispered to Paul, "Why would God love you, look at what you did to his church." "Look at how bad you are." "Sorry Paul, God can love anybody but you."

These same voices are used today by Satan. You see, Satan doesn't say, "God don't forgive." He just whisper, "God will forgive everybody but you."

Unless you and I recall our past, review the past, and repent over the past, there will be no rejoicing in the New Year.

1. FACE THE FACT THAT CHRIST HAS FORGIVEN YOU.

First, His forgiveness is not based on emotions. God's forgiveness toward us has nothing to do with emotions, but "His divine blood." Forgiveness has never and will never be based on "our emotions". You may well say, "I don't feel worthy of His forgiveness!" and that is true. But his forgiveness is based on "who He is". The wonder of the cross is this, our feelings have absolutely no bearing on the fact that we have been forgiven by God through Christ. **OUR SINS ARE COMPLETELY PAID FOR AND FORGIVEN.**

Second, His forgiveness is not based on the size of the sin. Another sobering and saddening trap of Satan is this demonic whisper, "God will forgive you of anything but that sin." Yet, when you look at the list of individuals in Scripture that God forgave, their sins were vast and numerous. God forgave Paul who committed murder against His precious servant Stephen. God forgave Moses of murdering an Egyptian soldier. God forgave David of adultery and a murderous scheme against Uriah. God forgave many in the Corinthian church who has been guilty of "same sex" relationships. The sobering reality is this...either the blood of Jesus Christ is sufficient to take care of our sins, or we are still in our sins, guilty before a Holy God.

Third, His forgiveness is not based on how long ago the sin was committed. There is no haunting sin you face from the past but what "The Cross" has already paid for it in total. Once you deal with that sin from 20 years ago, confess it, and it is gone. The sad reason so many have sins replaying in their mind is based on one simple and profound reality, they never confess the sin before God "BY NAME".

A person can read books about dealing with the past, but there is one way before the God of the universe that brings freedom from the past to enjoy the future...and that is "confession". If there was a better way than confession, the Father would have told us, but there is not. Sadly, Satan is having great success with many people who live "in defeat" for the simple reason that they read, yet they do not stop to bow and pray regarding "unconfessed sins". When we harbor unconfessed sins in our lives, consider a few things that happen: 1) Out of fellowship with God. 2) Out of fellowship with others. 3) Misery in our own lives. 4) Misery in our own bodies. 5) Father's ears closed to our prayers. 6) Living with a heart growing in agony.

Fourth, His forgiveness is based only on His perfect flawless blood. THE TRUTH OF SCRIPTURE IS THIS...HIS SHED BLOOD HAS ALREADY FORGIVEN YOU TOTALLY. Before a Holy God, Jesus cancelled your sins at the cross. The issue is...will you allow yourself to enjoy His forgiveness?

2. FIND FREEDOM BY CONFESSING ALL SINS BY NAME.

There is no confession of sins when our confession goes something like this, “Father forgive me of my sins!” Confession literally means “acknowledging a crime”. When we never are specific in our sin, we miss the joy of being cleansed and released from a heart that the Father loves to purify. When we confess in general, in truth there is no focus on any particular sin. True confession, the type that brings freedom and joy to our souls is a confession that is “candid and specific”. When David disobeyed God by having sexual relations with Bathsheba, he took one chapter to deal with his personal sins. Cleansing of the heart, and freedom of soul come only when we are willing to confess and “own” our sins against both God and others. When David took ownership of his sins, then and only then was there a release in his soul. God has so designed it that there “will never” be removal of the poison of sin in our lives apart from “confession and repentance”. When David repented and confessed his sins, then and only then did he find true joy, happiness, and tranquility in his own soul.

Confession must be open toward God. To be “free” with the freedom that God desires, is to be “open” allowing the Father to recall to our lives any and all events that have brought bondage. Though David had sinned against God, his willingness to be open, was key to a future life of blessing, that the Lord so desired for him, and the same is true with our lives as well. Life may find you having many “deeply rooted sins from the past” but all of those sins can be removed, when we are willing to allow the Father to surface “all things from the past”.

3. FORGIVE OTHERS WHO HAVE OFFENDED YOU.

Forgiving others is not something you “feel like doing”. *First, Forgiveness others is an “act of the will”.* Forgiveness isn’t based on their “deserving forgiveness”, but rather based on the fact that you and I have been forgiven through the blood of Christ, and have been given the power by the Father to forgive any and all who hurt us. The truth is when Christ died on the cross, He revealed that the innocent party always initiates forgiveness, never the guilty. When you are hurt, betrayed, offended, true forgiveness always initiates with the innocent party, never the guilty. When Christ forgave us, He didn’t forgive us based on “emotions” or “feelings”. He forgave us based on His blood. Since He has forgiven us, He has empowered us to forgive and release, e forgiveness, yet He forgave us any way. Forgiveness is an act of the will.

Second, forgiving others is a choice. When the Father told us to forgive, the truth is He leaves the final choice with us. While the Father will never force us to forgive another person, the fact is, we will never know His forgiveness when we refuse to release others. Our lives will be lives filled with bitterness, anger and resentment if our choice is to live with “unforgiveness in hearts. When we are willing to forgive, then the Father brings about His wonderful “freedom” into our lives continually.

Third, forgiving others means releasing them completely of all repayment. Who are you waiting to repay you for what they have taken from you? The truth is, there are many who have unforgiveness for many reasons. A childhood is robbed for one reason or the other, a person is robbed of purity through rape, a character is robbed through malicious lies. The fact is we develop “unforgiveness” for many reasons. However, because forgiveness comes from the Father Himself, something wonderful and supernatural happens in our lives when we are willing to forgive. When we choose to forgive, the Father removes “anger” with “sympathy” and “sorrow” for the person that offended us. When you forgive another...you expect no repayment. When Jesus forgave us, He removes us from having to pay for our sins, since He paid for them Himself. The same holds true when you forgive. Forgiveness is that point where you expect no repayment, no apology. Why? Because forgiveness always has to do with “complete cancellation of debt owed”. If you are awaiting someone to repay you for something in the past, then in truth there has not been complete forgiveness. Irregardless of the hurt, it is vital to remember ALL BELEIVERS CAN FORGIVE...BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE POWER OF CHRIST TO FORGIVE AS CHILDREN OF GOD.

4. FORGIVE AND RELEASE YOURSELF OF PAST FAILURES THROUGH PRAYER.

Since the Father has forgiven us of all of our sins, regardless of the degree, then the question that must be asked is this... “What prevents you from forgiving yourself?” But how do we forgive ourselves? Just the way we have been forgiven by the Father. First, it is vital to realize that the Father has forgiven us of all sins...irregardless of our past. Second, admit to the Father in prayer that is difficulty forgiving yourself. Third, pray the prayer of forgiveness. What is the prayer of forgiveness. It sounds something like this. *“Father, I admit I have been hurt, and been robbed by what _____ did to me. I choose to forgive them, and set them free, and right here and now I choose to forgive myself for holding unforgiveness toward them. In Christ I pray Amen.”*

Irregardless of how much reading you may do on forgiveness...no forgiveness takes place apart from “PRAYER”. When Jesus was dying on the cross, He prayed, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do. When we choose to release a person through forgiveness...the Father restores and renews our spirit with His freedom and overwhelming peace.

5. FORGET THE PAST.

When Satan brings up a picture out of the past, immediately thank God for His absolute and complete forgiveness.

Paul did, Peter did, Satan will do everything do your mind to prevent you from forgetting the past. Because he knows that when we continually think of past sins, we live a defeated life. But Paul forgave himself of persecuting the church or he would have been useless to God. The same forgiveness that Paul experienced is the same that each of us can experience, if we are willing to “choose to forgive”.