Forgiveness

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Preface

An apocalyptic sign for the end of this age is found, in the book of Revelation.

"Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter."—Rev. 8:10-11

Wormwood is made into a drink which not only intoxicates but drugs, brings stupor and even death. References to wormwood in the Bible usually refer to the bitterness of sin and judgment.

Another sign in this passage of Scripture is the falling star. Stars represent dignitaries and leaders on the earth. As never before, we are seeing leaders fall—especially spiritual leaders. Many, as they observe these leaders (who are often their idols) go down, become bitter and disenchanted. As the Word of God says: "Many men die (sic)..."

Primarily, people are dying spiritually as they fall away from their passions for the Lord and His Kingdom. The killer is bitterness.

This need not be. There is a way out and back into the refreshing joy of the Kingdom of God—also back into the power of the Holy Spirit bringing healing and health.

My prayer is for this book to help everyone who reads it to come anew or initially to that spring of living waters of forgiveness Jesus Christ has opened for all.

Peace, Micah Stephen Bell

The Greatest Power on Earth

Introduction

There is a power within every human being that can change the world and effect the entire creation. Perhaps, you don't know you have this ability, but you do. Most of us do not have the athletic ability to be a professional or the intellectual ability to probe the depths of quantum physics. Few have the billions of a Gates and Buffet to attempt to heal the world. But the playing field of life is completely leveled and all of us are created equal when it comes to the ability to choose to forgive. It is the greatest power on earth. Through this power, the God of the universe is saving His creation.

Unforgiveness has plundered the world.

It is the cause of wars, murder and divorce. The emotional revenue of unforgiveness is stress, anger, hatred and jealousy. Unforgiveness exposes the heart to emotional and spiritual wounds. It becomes a dictator of the soul and ironically subdues its host to control from the object not forgiven. Eventually, Unforgiveness gnaws its way into the physical body and plunders it with infirmities—even unto death.

Unforgiveness breeds terrorists wearing emotional bombs that ignite tempers spewing tearing shrapnel into other hearts and souls.

Surely, earth's greatest killer is not cancer, heart disease or some other physical malady. Earth's greatest killer is unforgiveness and heart bitterness.

Although bitterness slays its millions each year, it continues to remain hidden behind the medical arts' denial of the spiritual. How tragic to not look at the serpent lifted up and to die by this serpent's bite in the wilderness of unbelief.

God has not left us as helpless victims of disease and infirmities, nor abandoned us to the devices of man's paltry remedies

In reality—

We came from the invisible.

We return to the invisible.

Our day-to-day existence is rooted and influenced in the invisible realm of the spirit—for good or evil.

God's Word says we are souls. As souls we are to rule over our spirit part by yielding it to God's Holy Spirit once we are brought to life through the new birth. This rulership of our spirit man is by choice—decisions made by our will.

Once born again, there is no more important decision than to forgive. As God willingly forgives us when we look to Jesus Christ as our Savior (who gave His life as an acceptable sacrifice so God could forgive us), He requires us to forgive. As we are forgiven, so must we forgive. It is God's justice and wisdom.

There are absolutely no exceptions given by God—we must forgive. To not forgive leaves us vulnerable to the consequences of unforgiveness. We expose ourselves to the curses of the law through this sin.

If your choice is to not forgive anyone or anything, you may as well stop reading right now, but be warned you will suffer consequences of unforgiveness in your life. Perhaps, drugs will alleviate the inevitable symptoms for a while, but eventually unforgiveness will deliver you to spiritual, and eventually, physical death. Your diagnosis might be cancer, heart congestion, high blood pressure or some other name, but the fatal disease is really bitterness This muddy, rutted road to the grave will not be joyful or fulfilling.

Be warned also that bitterness can hide from its host. It can be a cunning adversary like a termite chewing away in the unseen foundations of your soul. Countless well-meaning souls have professed total meekness and then discovered hidden growths of this wormwood when seeking healing or deliverance from God.

The good news is that there is a cure. This cure brings not only divine healing, but also divine health. Read on.

The Devastation of Bitterness

"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.'-Hebrews 12:14-15

If bitterness simply killed its host, perhaps one could justify going to the grave so infected. Like cigarette smoke, though, bitterness spreads its residue until everyone within range begins to smell like the smoker. It is toxic even to the innocent bystander, if exposed long enough.

Personally, bitterness tears the spirit and poisons the soul. In the Bible, Cain's life vividly shows this. When God could not accept his offering, Cain became very angry. The Hebrew translation in the Schocken Bible says he became "exceedingly upset." The passage then says Cain's "face" or countenance fell. Cain was obviously affected personally and physically by his temper. Proverbs 14:30 tells us: "A sound heart is life to the body, but envy is rottenness to the bones."

Bitterness leaves one unforgiven and breeds deception. A bitter person begins to believe God does not care for or love him. The feelings of rejection often lead to immorality with all of its intimate consequences.

Bitterness has devastating effects in three critical areas:

• It affects your relationship with God. Hebrews 12:14 tells us to "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord." Bitterness will cut you off from God.

- It affects your relationship with yourself. Hebrews 12:15 says bitterness will cause one to fall short of the grace of God and cause one trouble. You begin to turn on yourself. Self-criticism, condemnation and rejection creep in.
- It affects your relationship with others. "Many become defiled."

Bitterness certainly affects our peers. The bitter one builds walls of personal isolation with feelings of loneliness and self-pity. This leads one to believe he or she is a victim trapped and helpless to do anything but lash out. The target is not always the accused. It can be any available party. Eventually, relationships are broken. As the lifegiving cords of love are severed, the root of bitterness grows deeper and the bondage stronger.

Ironically, withholding forgiveness causes a bondage to the very one so hated. In fact, unforgiveness causes idolatry. The one hated is held above God and therefore becomes a god in the bitter one's life.

Bitterness has public and political effects in one's life. The outcome of all bitterness is murder. Look at Cain again. In Genesis 4:6-7, the Schocken Bible says: "YHWH (God) said to Kayin (Cain): Why are you so upset? Why has your face fallen? Is it not thus: If you intend good, bear-it-aloft, but if you do not intend good, at the entrance is sin, a crouching-demon, toward you his lust—but you can rule over him."

Cain did not decide to rule over the demon. He gave place to it and murdered his brother. I John 2:11 says: "But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes." Chapter 3:11-12, 15 tells us: "We should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous.... Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."

Although some can find the grace to forgive others, many cannot forgive themselves. One can cause others hurt by not

forgiving them, but the real devastation comes to the unforgiver.

If we will not forgive ourselves, then we are saying that God has not also. Such an attitude fosters self-condemnation and guilt leaving one dysfunctional in many areas of life and especially in the spiritual realm.

Unforgiveness is devastating. Only through God can you know it.

How to Know if You have Unforgiveness

"The heart knows its own bitterness, and a stranger does not share its joy."—Proverbs 14:10

Many people are in denial about their unforgiveness. Unforgiveness can integrate into a personality and camouflage itself to the host. Almost without exception, if you honestly dig deep enough into your heart, you will find hidden unforgiveness.

Unforgiveness has distinctive symptoms, but symptoms are not the real problem. Symptoms are like the visible part of a tree. All the while, the real problem lies hidden in the roots under the ground. The axe must be laid the roots to truly destroy a tree. So it is with unforgiveness. The root of unforgiveness is bitterness.

Unforgiveness with its bitter root usually manifests the following symptoms:

Anger, angry outbursts or temper over reaction to situations

Temper tantrums hurt. Feelings of others are abused and the host goes away unsettled and usually guilt laden. Angry outbursts are a form of retaliation—a way to "get back" for the pain rendered in some relationship, usually, from the past. Anger will never be overcome until the bitter source is removed. Behind the over reaction is always some unresolved conflict.

Criticism or judgment - Constant negative observations

Some folks always see the negative or ugly first. Instead of "rose-colored" glasses, they have "gray-colored" ones. A bitter root causes a person to see themselves as worthless and defiled. Because they have not confronted the unresolved root of unforgiveness, they remain in denial and project their distorted discernment on anyone and everything they see.

Jealousy or envy

Feelings of worthlessness and defilement leads to insecurity. The insecure person looks with envy at those "better-off" then himself. When some kind of relationship is developed, the insecure, bitter one is always jealous because of paranoid fear of losing any ounce of affection to another party.

Impatience and selfishness

Strange as it may seem, a bitter root becomes a precious commodity. Like a dog licking its own wound, the bitter person nurses and protects the ugly lesion of hurt. Selfishness helps protect the scene of the crime, and impatience is the epitome of selfishness. The tap root feeding this uncomely garden is bitterness and unforgiveness.

Hatred - a subtle form of idolatry

It could be said that hatred is unforgiveness in full maturity. Unforgiveness focused on another person, develops hatred. The focus of hatred is like worship. The hated person becomes godlike, a source of obsessive thinking and desire—desire to retaliate. This is idolatry. Ironically, what one hates, one becomes more and more like. It is a vicious circle of defeat and death.

No enduring relationships * pattern of broken relationships

The guile of one's bitter pool will eventually spill out in every relationship. Such a soul will usually have no close friends, at least, for very long. All that's left is the natural family, and sometimes even they must reject the fellowship of such caustic relatives.

Isolation.

Bitterness often leads a person to isolate themselves. The inner pain increases when around other people because it heightens the awareness of the reason for the pain. You will find in every hermit a bitter pond. "A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; he rages against all wise judgment." —Proverbs 18:1

Heaviness and depression

The Bible tells us that heaviness is a spirit. All moods are spirits, including depression. When an unclean spirit comes and is able to so influence, it is because of sin—the sin of unforgiveness.

Lack of the manifestation of God's natural gifting's—failure in life

Bitterness from unforgiveness can sabotage a person's life dream. There are other hindrances such as occult exposures, but bitterness is less obvious and goes un-discerned. One with a bitter root will often find they are not interested in any kind of a spiritual life, or more devastating than that, will become fascinated, seduced and captured by the dark realm of the occult or witchcraft.

Infirmities

Ultimately, the sewage of the pond of bitterness will defile the flesh. Infirmities are inevitable and usually numerous in bitter people. Drugs may alleviate the symptoms for a while, but without the offending source being removed, the agony of the illness will drag on and on.

Other indications of bitterness in one's life can be unanswered prayer, darkened or sad countenance and/or chronic guilt and condemnation. So often, one searches earnestly for relief, working from the assumption that all is forgiven, but to no avail.

This malady causes inappropriate responses. An act of kindness by another will elicit a self put-down or some other negative comment. The defiling spirit of bitterness cripples every opportunity for celebration of joy or sincere gratitude.

The Bible says the heart knows its own bitterness, but we must be willing to admit it. Rooting this out of your heart will make it fertile ground for new life in spirit, soul and body to produce the fruits of the Spirit.

If you desire such, it is essential that you know why and how you got this way to begin with.

Why am I Unforgiving and Bitter?

"The foolishness of a man twists his way, And his heart frets against the LORD"—Proverbs 19:3

You may find this difficult to accept but, ultimately, we are bitter because we believe God has failed us. Most will not admit such; nevertheless, deep down inside, we feel God should be responsible in certain areas since it is God, the sovereign one, who is ultimately responsible for all thing on earth. Of course, it is people who hurt us, disappoint us or fail us, but after all, God being God, could He not have prevented it?

In frustration and lack of understanding, we say, "Why God?"

Following their great victory crossing the Red Sea, as we read in the book of Exodus, God let Moses and Israel go three days without any water. When God finally led them to a water hole, they were thrilled. Their joy was short-lived when they found the water bitter and undrinkable. Immediately they began to complain against Moses (who was the authority of God). They really knew Moses was trying to follow God's leadership, but they were afraid to accuse God directly. God's first test for His people was to flush up (and hopefully out) the bitterness of their hearts. Sad to say, they failed miserably. The watering hole was named Marah, meaning bitter. (See Exodus 15:22-27)

Reasons for Bitterness

In the sermon on the mount in Matthew 5, Jesus taught that the Kingdom of God consists of attitudes. Attitudes reveal one's heart or true self. The beatitudes are "Being-Attitudes." Throughout chapters 5 through 7 in Matthew, Jesus teaches ways to react in various situations. Each of these situations is occasion for bitterness, if one's heart is not established in forgiveness.

Dominance or Control

"If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell."—Matt. 5:29

Dominance or control by anyone or anything can cause bitterness. Everyone is controlled in some way, although most are not aware of it. The most deceived are those without Christ who believe they are really free. Actually, they are totally controlled by the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience... —Eph. 2:2-3

Lust can be a source of control as can addiction. The origin of strong desire can be a body member, such as the eye, or it can be an obsessive attachment to some possession or person. Fear causes us not let go of the obsession; consequently, bitterness, like a taproot, begins to grow in our soul.

Covenant Breaking

"But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."—Matt. 5:37

A covenant cannot be broken without consequences. Ask a spouse or child who has been touched by divorce. Breaking the covenant of marriage has far reaching and lifetime effects. Jesus warns of this in the preceding verses 31 and 32 of Matthew 5. Regardless of the situation or how justified the reason, breaking the intimate agreement of marriage always requires forgiveness and healing.

When promises are broken by anyone, the poison of bitterness can enter through the resulting wound. Once we experience broken promises, our trust erodes. With the loss of trust, we become suspicious and hopelessly bogged in a swamp of unforgiveness and bitterness.

Abuse of Authority

"And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." —Matt. 5:41

Most of us have experienced what we have felt to be unfair demands from authority. Without a renewed submissive spirit, resentment is spawned that opens the door for bitterness.

Beyond unfair demands, abuse can come from a powerful authority figure that should be sheltering and protecting, not abusing. The abuse can be sexual, verbal or physical; regardless, the abused leaves one with deep roots of resentment and bitterness. Every victim of sexual or marital abuse is left with a deep growth of wormwood (a symbol and type of bitterness in the Bible) in their soul.

Inflicted Pain

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."—Matt. 5:44

Any experience or event that causes physical pain can open the door for unforgiveness and bitterness. A simple accident might never be forgiven, although forgotten.

Experiences that render inner or emotional pain are often buried beyond conscience awareness. Until understanding comes about its effects, many never realize their need to deal with such woundings.

Pain can be inflicted intentionally as well as unintentionally; nonetheless, it is real and hurtful to the receiver and eventually must be addressed if there is to be any hope to full healing and wholeness.

False Expectations

"For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?"—Matt. 5:46

It is not uncommon for us to expect something from someone they cannot give us. We may feel they "owe" us something such as love, respect or faithfulness. The other party may not even know how we feel toward them, but we continue to be offended when they fall short of our expectations.

Included in such thinking, though often not admitted, is the

conviction that God owes me certain things. We come back to asking, "Why, God?" Such an attitude reveals a deep root of bitterness.

In all cases, we are expecting rewards not promised.

We may go so far as to set expectations for ourselves that we cannot meet. It may be that we are seeking the wrong reward for our efforts; regardless, such goals, conscience or unconscious, only provide frustration and failure and fertile soil for the root of bitterness.

Ultimately, everyone starts out in life with the assumption they have a right to be loved. When love does not come, or it does not come in we way expected or demanded, we will become bitter if we do not learn to forgive.

Such was the case of Naomi (whose name means pleasant) in the book of Ruth, who felt God was punishing her because she lost her husband and two sons in death. Because of her refusal to admit her own unbelief and distrust, she chose to change her name to Mara (which means bitter).

"And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath tes tffied against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?" -Ruth 1:20-21

All such thinking is foolishness, says God's Word, yet, we chose to fret against the Lord and not forgive.

Forgiveness is a choice! In it we choose life!

Why even hesitate?

Getting Rid of Bitterness

"And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD showed him a tree, which when he had cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet..."—Exodus 15:25

We must forgive. Common sense requires it. Logic requires it. God requires it. We either forgive or diminish our life. It is a requirement of God. If we do not forgive, we will not be forgiven—something we all desperately need. There is no intelligent or spiritual alternative.

Forgiveness is a choice. Emotions will rage against forgiving. The mind will present an airtight case of cold logic proving solid ground to not forgive. The flesh or physical body will come on stage urging retaliation, sometimes through force or violence. It is no light thing for a human to forgive. It is not natural or easy. It goes against the very core of his being, but it is crucial to our quality of life and eternal future.

Forgiveness is not condoning or overlooking. By forgiving we are not saying that what was done was right. Forgiveness does not hinge on right or wrong. We forgive because God forgives, and we are commanded to do the same.

Case closed.

Who or What do we forgive?

In simple words—EVERYBODY and EVERYTHING.

PEOPLE — Everyone, regardless of what they have done to us or not done for us—no exceptions.

SO-CALLED ACTS OF GOD - Everything in your life not understood—God is never unfair and He alone is sovereign.

SELF — Completely—looks, birth circumstance, intellectual ability, mistakes—all of it—God does. So must we.

How do we Forgive?

We Choose to forgive.

Forgiveness begins with a choice. It is an act of the will.

We must push aside emotions, take dominion over our thoughts, constrain the fleshly desire to pay back—then choose.

The ultimate power for this action comes through the cross of Jesus Christ and His spilled blood. There can be no real forgiveness without acknowledgment of God's provision to help us do it. This is not some psychological technique—this is real Christianity.

When we choose to forgive, we choose to die—to take up our cross following the Lord as he willingly laid down His life.

"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground ana dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain." —-John 12:24

We repent of Actions and Attitudes

We must change our mind, which is what repentance really means. We choose to stop hating and hurting; stop being mad; stop being upset, frustrated, irritated, chafed and provoked.

We must stop thinking of ways to retaliate. Stop even thinking of what you would or should have done if you could only play that scene again. Getting back at someone never really "pays." It always costs in multiple consequences.

Make Restitution

Often total forgiveness requires recompense.

Out of bitterness, we often take from others and hurt them. To clean the slate we must go ask them for forgiveness and/or seek to satisfy the debt owed by our offense.

On the other hand, we may be bitter because of a debt owed to us. To get free, we forgive the debt—no matter what it is. We turn it over to God and rest in Him. He promises He will repay if we leave it to Him.

What price is peace?

Be Healed

Most who suffer from bitterness carry wounds unhealed. The continuing unforgiveness keeps the wound from healing. It is constantly agitated and reopened. Eventually, the physical body will begin showing damage.

Only God can heal emotional wounds and will, when asked. By His stripes we can be healed emotionally and physically, but we must appropriate it.

Ask and you will receive if you will believe.

Forgive Yourself

Although some can find the grace to forgive others, many cannot forgive themselves. You can cause others hurt by not forgiving them, but the real devastation comes to the unforgiver. If we will not forgive ourselves, then we are saying that God has not also. Such an attitude fosters self-condemnation and guilt leaving one dysfunctional in many areas of life and especially in the spiritual realm.

Continue to Forgive

There is a demonic aspect of bitterness called memory recall. People who cannot remember why they came into a room can remember some offense from years gone by—in great detail.

Although, we may take the initial step of forgiving, it may take weeks and months to purge the memory and emotions of the infection.

Forgiving is like cleaning a sponge. Once a sponge has soaked up something like paint, it must be rinsed and rinsed to ever get all the paint out of it. In the same way, as thoughts come back about some hurt or abuse, we continue to choose to forgive. We simply say it: "I forgive them or that."

Eventually the emotions will settle and the pain abate. Out of this kind of life will come a pearl of great price—healing and peace.

As you pray the following prayer, and continue to pray it, you can find the way to total forgiveness and the peace that passes all understanding. Great healing will follow.

A Prayer of Forgiveness

"And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his neart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses." -Matthew 18:34-35

(To be spoken aloud)

Father in heaven, I reverence you as God of all the earth. I believe You sent Your son, Jesus Christ, to the earth.

I believe He gave up His place with you in glory, took on human form, taught and ministered to all people who would receive Him and submitted to unjust punishments.

I believe Jesus, the son of man, died on a cruel cross like a common criminal to absolve the debt of my personal sins, the iniquities of my forefathers and the sins of the world.

I thank you, Father in heaven, for raising Jesus from the dead to live forever as my great high priest.

Thank you, Father, for sending the Holy Spirit to set all of those apart who receive Him as baptizer and the One who empowers us to live the life of a true believer.

Father, in the Name of Jesus, I confess that I and those of my family as far back as Adam have not loved, but have resented certain people and groups who have hurt or disappointed us.

We have held:

UNFORGIVENESS, BITTERNESS, HATRED,

ANGER, RAGE, DESIRE FOR RETALIATION AND EVEN MURDER IN OUR HEARTS AND MEMORIES.

I confess we have caused hurt to others by our behavior and lack of love. You have told me in Your Word, that to be forgiven, I must forgive..

I chose to obey Your Word individually and in behalf of all those in my family tree.

Father, I plead the work of the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God, as authorization to come before You in this matter for myself and in behalf of all those in my family tree.

As God of the living who lives outside of time, bring all of the (Father's last name) and (Mother's last name) families before You that we may be absolved of our debts of unforgiveness.

I declare and confirm my and our forgiveness to:

- Each and every person, living or dead, who has in any way hurt, disappointed, betrayed, failed, abused or caused unjust pain to me.
- Every institution, organization or authority that has caused undue hardship in my life because of unfairness, thievery or deceptiveness.

Father, I wait now for You to bring to my mind, through, the Holy Spirit's, ministry any specific person or situation I need to forgive.

I will to forgive: (Pause here to see whatthe Holy Spirit brings to mind. Then specifically forgive each person or situation.)

Father, Your Word says that whoever calls on Your name shall be delivered.

I ask now for deliverance from the curses and effects of unforgiveness and bitterness and do renounce the unclean spirits involved.

I renounce, rebuke and expel spirits of:

UNFORGIVENESS, ANGER, VIOLENCE, HATRED, RETALIATION, MURDER AND MEMORY RECALL.

I curse the root of bitterness to wither and dry-up to its roots and never again bear fruit in my life.

I break every curse that has come upon me and my family because of unforgiveness and its effects.

Father, I now confess all of this as my personal sin including the sins and iniquities of my forefathers and ask Your forgiveness through the suffering and dying of Your Son and my Savior, Jesus Christ.

Father, in heaven, I do now receive Your forgiveness knowing I have forgiven. I believe Your Word that says if we confess our sins You are faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Thank you, for cleansing us from all the effects of unforgiveness and bitterness.

In the Name of Jesus Christ, I renounce, rebuke and cast-out the unclean spirits of guilt, condemnation, unworthiness, shame, infirmities and fears that have come in because of a bitter heart.

I stand now, believing I am forgiven, knowing there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus.

I am forgiven, Father.
I am loved.
I am Your child.
Thank You, now and forevermore.
Amen.



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