

The Consequences of an Unforgiving Spirit

by Lou Sutera

An unforgiving spirit can lead to a life of bondage, pain, and separation from God's presence and blessing.

Duration: 1:00:29

Scripture: Matthew 5:43-44, Matthew 6:33, 1 Peter 3:8-9

Topics: "Forgiveness"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of forgiveness. He highlights that if we expect God to forgive us, we must also forgive others. Refusing to forgive someone is seen as an insult to God. The preacher encourages the audience to choose forgiveness and witness the miraculous impact it can have on their lives. He shares a story of a couple who lost everything but remained happy because they chose to forgive. The sermon concludes with the reminder that aspiring to be like Jesus and forgiving others is a powerful prayer that can lead to answered prayers and a fulfilling life.

Transcript

I mean, here's an interesting newspaper article. It said, if you lost family to genocide, could you forgive? Interesting, huh? And there's, people send letters in. One is, revenge over justice.

And the other headline is, never forget. The other one, finding peace. One guy found peace.

Another one, can't relate or can't forgive. Genocide. Suppose you have a family member in genocide.

Forgive? Here's an interesting one. Louis Zamberini, he had a struggle to forgive. You want to know why? Because he had a struggle to forgive his Japanese captors who mercilessly tortured him for nearly two years.

And there's a story how God broke his heart and he forgave those captors who mercilessly tortured him for two years. I think those are the kind of stories if only you knew, huh? If only you knew. Well, you know what? I want to say to you, no matter how painful the stories we could hear in this meeting here tonight.

And you know, because we're all human, we empathize with you. We feel with you. And you, I hear your story and I said, oh, I can understand your pain or I can't.

But I can feel with you and I can feel with you and feel with you. We can emphasize where people have come from and the problems they've had in their life. And in a natural way, our hearts go out to you

because of that.

But let me go on to say this. If no matter what the situation that you can tell me, if only you knew about my life, you'd understand why I can't forgive. I want to tell you, if you go out of this meeting tonight and still carry that situation where you say, I can't forgive because it's if only you knew, you'd know why.

Let me tell you the tragedy of that statement. When you tell me tonight, I just can't forgive. I hope this is a night there's not a soul goes out of that door saying, I can't forgive.

I hope, I hope it'll all be settled. You know why? Here's why. If you tell me tonight, you can't forgive.

You know what you're doing to yourself? No matter how painful it is. That's why I'm taking two nights to talk about it. That God set you free.

What a night last night. So many folks in this meeting dealt with this sin of unforgiveness last night. I think half of the congregation was a marvelous thing.

And I told them they're getting off light tonight, but they'll be glad and then they'll be blessed. But all for us to know. If you tell me tonight, if there's anybody in this meeting saying, I just can't forgive.

You know what you're doing to yourself? You are opening yourself up to, listen, the potential of 12 other spirits beyond that unforgiving spirit. If only you knew. I'm telling you what.

Here are, and here's an hour sermon in about two minutes. You like that kind? Here we go. Here it is.

You have a retaliating spirit. A destructive spirit. An impatient spirit.

An unspiritual spirit. A proud spirit. A self-righteous spirit.

A disobedient spirit. A rebellious, stubborn spirit. An angry spirit.

A judgmental, critical spirit. An unforgetting spirit. Talked a little about that last night.

And then the bottom line is, a prayerless spirit. Don't bother praying. I wonder, can you live with those 12 spirits? You see why? I said, no matter how painful your story, I hope there's not a soul that goes out of this meeting tonight saying, I just can't forgive.

The price is too high to pay when you tell me I just can't forgive. You know, today in my studies, I looked at this and started reading some other articles about it. I came across a statement that just sort of shocked me.

It almost says an amen to what I just said. You know what statement it is? It's a statement by Charles Haddon Spurgeon. You know, when you say that, that's one of the great writers and great preachers of all times.

Great pulpeters of all times. And listen to what he said about it. And here's the statement.

He said this. If you pray, if you pray. You remember, we ended with a prayerless spirit.

That was the last one. And we talked last night and we talked Monday night about praying. We saw that DVD about praying to where God can answer.

And Liz talks about praying for her children. And we all need to know how to pray. What can we do without praying? And listen to what he said.

If you pray with an unforgiving spirit. Charles Haddon Spurgeon now. You are signing your own death warrant.

What a statement. You're signing your own death warrant. Charles Spurgeon.

What does it mean death to what? Maybe not physical. Might even be. But death to relationship with God.

The kind of relationship you would have. Death to so many situations in your life. Death to relationship with your family and your children.

On and on it goes. We can build a whole message on that. When he says that.

So I suggest to you. What are the alternatives to reconciliation? You say I won't forgive. What are the alternatives? I'll tell you.

Physical. Spiritual. Emotional.

Social. And mental effects. When you tell me.

I can't forgive. Spiritual. Emotional.

Social. Mental. Emotional effects.

And physical as well. An unforgiving spirit is poison to your soul. More poison to you, the person who holds it.

Than the person against the one you're holding against. More damage to you. Unforgiveness does more damage to the vessel in which it's held.

Than the vessel against which it's held. A man that studies revenge. Keeps his own wounds green.

Amazing. You know even in the world. In the world.

Dear Abby. You ever hear about dear Abby in our country? She's the lady that people ask about this problem, that problem. And get answers.

And dear Abby. Somebody wrote in. And dear Abby says.

Unforgiveness is pain. Forgiveness eases pain. That's the way the world talks about it.

You say it's hard to forgive. I'll tell you. It's easier on you than taking vengeance.

Easier than taking vengeance. When I suggest that. That whatever forgiveness costs you.

Unforgiveness costs you more. Worse. You know what? We keep on paying.

We keep on paying and paying. Which is why people carry drudges right to their grave. They're still paying for the unforgiving spirit.

Right to their grave. What a price to pay. Max Licato, one of the great writers in our country.

Puts it like this. Forgiveness is what? Unlocking the door to set someone free. And realizing that you are the prisoner being set free.

A lady who heard him say that. She said. Wow.

Quite true. She said. We lock up ourselves with so much self-righteous anger.

You know, we think we have a right to be angry about that situation. And she said. We lock up ourselves with so much self-righteous anger.

And we hold on to it. And we hold on to our list of wrongs done against us. We just magnify those lists of wrongs done against us.

The word forgiveness. You know what it actually means? It actually means to be set free. To be released.

To be released from being tied up in knots. That's the meaning. Being set free to being released from being tied up in knots.

Forgiveness. Do you need it tonight? Well, interesting. When I was flying here in the airlines, airplane.

They have these booklets where you can buy things. You know, these magazines there. And I always like to look in when I fly.

I like to look in the pages where they have models that you can put on the wall. I like to see what they have where you can buy these models you put on the wall. Interesting.

And coming here. Look what I found. Here's a model that they talk about that you can buy.

Anyone can hold a grudge. But it takes a person with character to forgive. This is the world talking.

When you forgive, you release yourself from a painful burden. Here's a model you can buy. Forgiveness doesn't mean what happened was okay.

And it may not mean that person can still be welcome in your life because of the situation. It just means. This is what you can buy on the world now.

You can buy it. It just means you have made peace with the pain. And you are ready to let it go.

Isn't it amazing? How much our Bible says. And look what they say. You can buy the model from the paper there.

A number of years ago, Ralph and I had the privilege of preaching out in Kingston, Ontario. And Belleville, Ontario. Kingston, Ontario.

And there was a lady there in that crusade that it seemed like she had such a heart for God. She had a heart for God. But there was a wall.

There was something blocking her experience with God. And blocking her relationship with people around about her. In the church.

And the ladies in the church would come to Ralph and me and said, Vera, we just can't get close to her. There's something there. Something there.

And Ralph and I sensed the same. And we couldn't help her. About ten years later, I think it was.

We were in Belleville, Ontario. A little distance from Kingston. And one night, here she comes.

The same lady. And she said, Ralph and Luke, can we talk with you after the meeting tonight? Yeah. And she said, I need to tell you the story.

And she told us the story. She said when she was a teenager, she went to a Christian boarding school. Went 1,500 miles away to go to a Christian boarding school.

And in that boarding school, the headmaster of that Christian boarding school was almost a man like the Jim Jones that carried on down there in Guyana years ago. And he had such a powerful influence on us. And he talked me into having sexual relationship with him and carried on with me.

And for those years, a number of those years I was there, carried on with him in such a way. I was almost like helpless from his advances. And she said, there was a young man in the school there that felt the call of God on his life.

He wanted to be a preacher. He wanted to be a missionary. And then he said, I'd like to date you.

And he wanted to date me. And so, we started a date. He said, I love you.

He said, would you be interested in marrying me? And she said, how could I marry? I was so filthy. And be a missionary's wife? How could I? And she said no to that young man who wanted to be a missionary. He didn't say no.

She went out from that school. Instead of marrying a young man who had served the Lord, she got involved with a man who was an absolute alcoholic and an atheist. And she married that man.

And she'd been living for years in a home where the man will not allow her to say Jesus in the house, no Bibles, nothing like that. He let her go to church. And here's a woman who has a heart for God, wanted to serve the Lord, wanted to be in the Lord's work.

And that's the marriage she was in, in that situation. And she came to us and said, Ralph and Lou, I want to tell you, I had to drive 1,500 miles to go into an office and let a man know that I forgave him from the bondage of that situation. After how many years? She is as old as my twin brother.

And that ain't no spring chicken, right? And I mean, when I say she is as old as he is, I am telling you, she was born on the very day he was born. Not just on our birthday, on the day he was born. And this is how many years of wasted life in bondage.

And she was now like a bird out of a cage. She became the pastor's right hand man and all those gifts and talents and abilities came out. After all of those years, I'm talking about years and years and years in bondage.

Now, I've told you that story to tell you what she said she learned. Here it is. She said, I learned this.

I learned if you can't forgive the past, you are paralyzed in terms of changing the future. And that's what she was. Men and women, you know what? Without forgiveness, you'll stay stuck in the past and that's no place to stay stuck in.

And there's where she was. She said, secondly, I learned that forgiveness was damage control. She said, it gave me control over what that situation had done in my life.

And then thirdly, she said, those who created yesterday's pains do no longer control tomorrow's potential. She was set free. You know when I tell you this? I was speaking in Prince George a number of years ago and gave this story, I don't know if it was this story, but speaking on the subject of forgiveness.

And a man that night, God set him free from a bitterness of years standing. And when he gave his testimony, and I hope it's somebody's testimony here tonight. And she said these words.

He said these words, God met me with forgiveness tonight from resentment, from bitterness and pain. And he went on to say, another captive has been set free. Are there some captives here tonight to be set free? I'm believing God for it.

You'll be set free. Now, having said that as a background, let me just take the rest of the time and say, what are the consequences of the unforgiving spirit? I told you the potential of having, first of all, 12 other spirits. Now, what are the consequences? Let me quickly, because our time has gotten away tonight, but here, the loss and the power of the presence of God in your life.

The loss and the power of the presence of God in your life. Can you live without that? Loss of the power and the presence of God in your life. One great preacher in my country said, hidden bitterness, hidden deep in the soul, is a far more fruitful cause of spiritual defeat and powerlessness in the Christian life than we have any idea.

Hidden bitterness way back. And we wonder why we have no power in our Christian life. Secondly, I suggest to you, here's the consequence of the unforgiving spirit.

You rob yourself of the blessing of God. You rob yourself of the blessing of God. That's a high price.

1 Peter 3, 8 and 9 says, not rendering evil for evil. Don't give evil back for evil. And don't give railing for railing.

But contrary wise, 180 degrees, God says, I want to be different. Give blessing for evil. Give blessing for railing.

Why? Knowing that you are there unto called. God says, I call the people to be so different from the way the world operates. I want people who they give blessing for railing.

And they give a blessing for evil. The world doesn't do that, but I want people to do that. Says, why? That you should inherit a blessing.

You want a blessing? There it is. Thirdly, I suggest, consequence of unforgiving spirit, you break the wings of faith and prayer. We said a prayerless spirit.

Here it is in Timothy. Paul said, I will therefore, Timothy 2, 8, I will therefore that men pray everywhere. How? Lifting up holy hands.

If you are going to pray, you have to have holy hands. What do you mean, Timothy? Will you tell us what, Paul? What do you mean, holy hands? What are you talking about? Here it is. Without wrath.

No angry spirit. And without doubting. Yeah, if you have an angry spirit, wrath.

An angry, a bitter spirit, wrath. And there is going to be doubting in it. If you doubt your praying, it won't go.

You know something is wrong. There it is. So, you hush the cry of prayer.

As we said, the fourth consequence of unforgiving spirit. You bring upon yourself, what? Self-inflicted unforgiveness from God. I like that.

You bring upon yourself, self-inflicted unforgiveness from God. You know what? In the Beatitudes, Matthew 5, 7, it says, Blessed are the merciful. What's merciful? That's a forgiving man.

What's the blessing? For they shall obtain mercy. Yeah. You'll get mercy yourself.

When you are merciful. Oh. You come to the story of Matthew 18.

Where the unforgiving slave. What a story that is. What a story.

Here's a man. You know the story. A man who was forgiven.

Ten thousand talents. Now, you know sometimes you read the word talents in the Bible. You wonder what it's all about.

Well, let me clue you in. Ten thousand talents is the equivalent of probably twenty-five million dollars today. Ten thousand talents.

Twenty-five million dollars. And you know what? He begs for forgiveness. Twenty-five million.

He begs for forgiveness. Somebody said, How'd he get that money? How'd he get so rich? He probably was a tax collector or somebody and stole all the money from people and stacked it all up. Well, that'd be his name.

But anyway, that's how much money he was forgiven. And he begged for forgiveness. And he got forgiveness.

And then you know what? He went out and found the fellow that owed him some money. And you know what the other fellow owed him? The other fellow owed him one hundred denarii. One hundred denarii.

Now, you know what that is? That's the equivalent of ten thousand dollars. He got forgiven twenty-five million. And he had a guy who owed him ten thousand.

And you know what? That guy, he gets grabbed by him, says, Hey, pay me up right now. Pay me up right now. You know, ten thousand dollars, that's about three months salary in the culture.

And you know, he could have worked that off in a little bit of time if he'd had a little time, you know. But the guy said, No, right now. Right now I'll throw you in prison.

How do you like that? Isn't that amazing? What nerve. What nerve. Just for a minute.

The man probably, when he saw the man coming to him, he figured he was going to be invited to the celebration, his party. Instead he grabbed him and said, Hey, pay up. What nerve.

Well, I'll tell you what, men and women. What nerve, we say. I'll tell you.

It stands to reason that that represents the heart of your life and mine when you and I have been forgiven far more than twenty-five million. Amen? An eternal debt. And then, we refuse to forgive somebody who gives us a little ten dollar situation in the light, in comparison to the eternal debt or ten thousand.

What's ten thousand? You know, we're talking in general terms. Isn't it amazing, men and women? It stands to reason your sins have been forgiven by Jesus. You have been forgiven eternal debt.

What is this business that you would have? Any kind of situation in your life be too big to be forgiven when you've been forgiven like that. The Bible says that the Lord, when He heard about the man that He wouldn't forgive the guy of the little bit, He said, Take him and throw him in prison until he pays me back all that he owes. Never in ten lifetimes could He even pay twenty-five million back in the culture of that day.

There it was. There it was. Turned over to the torturers.

You know, Jesus tells us this story. And you know why He tells it? Because He wants this story, not to be a story you just read back there, but He wants it to ring through the corridors of time and come right into this meeting here tonight for you and me. And He does it.

Jesus puts the finger into that story when He says these words. He says, Jesus, so shall your heavenly Father do to you if each of you does not forgive his brother from his heart. How do you like that? The story teaches us a few things.

Here it is. It teaches us if we don't forgive others, then why should God forgive us? The story teaches, to ask God to give me something that I refuse to give to somebody else is the ultimate insult to God Himself. How could you insult God any more than that? You ask Him to give you what you won't give somebody else.

What an insult to God. I believe the story teaches, the person who cannot forgive others is actually breaking the bridge, the bridge over which he himself needs to trod. Why? Because this agreement with Satan blocks God's forgiving him.

You don't have a forgiving spirit. Look at it. It's really an agreement with Satan.

When you say, you can't forgive. A man came up to Charles Wesley and he said, I never forgive. Charles Wesley turned about and said, Sir, I hope you never sin.

Do we get it? An unforgiving spirit, here it is, is ignoring the truth. Here's why we carry an unforgiving spirit. We are ignoring the truth, what? That our sin against God is more serious than anybody else's sin could be against us.

Therefore, whatever it costs us to forgive someone else will be infinitely less than what it costs God to forgive us. Somebody wrote a poem that put it, when we talk about what Jesus did. In blazing light your cross reveals the truth we dimly know how small the debts men owe to us how great our debt we owe to you.

I was reading an article about a Christian counselor who was counseling a couple because the man had lived for a number of years in private immorality. His wife didn't know it. He was a leader in the church and his wife didn't know what was going on in his life.

And then, he got under such conviction after years of carrying on an immoral relationship. He got under such conviction he knew he had to cough it up as it were. He went to the pastor for counseling and then he knew he had to ask his wife for forgiveness in the situation.

And the pastor had to deal with that broken hearted wife for years and years and she knew nothing about it. And then finally, God gave her the ability to forgive that man, that husband. And the pastor said, I'll never forget the words no matter how painful.

He said, I was seemingly almost more angry and I didn't even take it as well as she took it. I was a pastor of the church and to think, all those years he made such a profession and that's the way he was living. He said, I'll never forget the words that came off her lips.

She said, How could I not forgive him when the Lord has forgiven me of so much? Bottom line folks, bottom line, basically teaches that God's forgiveness for us and our forgiveness of others are inescapably bound together. We ought to pray, Lord forgive me as I forgive those who have broken my heart just like I have broken your heart. Forgive me Lord as I forgive those who have broken my heart just as I have broken your heart.

There is the basis of forgiveness, the view of what my Lord has done for me. There is no situation where a person can go unforgiven. No basis for it.

And then I suggest to you, the consequence of an unforgiving spirit is physical problems. Potential health problems. Health problems.

You know some people can go to every doctor going for their physical problem and will never get healed. Their problems are, one doctor said these words, a doctor has proven that bitterness in the heart is the most devastating physical sin that any person can commit against his physical body. It thins out his bones.

It will destroy him. It will break down the immune system of the body to at least 40 different diseases. Bitterness breaks down the immune system to 40 different diseases.

Dr. Francis in Dallas, Texas said, Anger causes headaches and other things. There is need of forgiveness which cleanses the heart of bitterness. Medical doctor.

A doctor on television in Toronto, not even a Christian. And he was being interviewed and he said, Anger and hostility release hormones that increase susceptibility to heart attacks. I'm just telling you what he said.

Another marriage counselor on television said, You've got to forgive because it's too expensive to your body. That's the world talking, men and women. Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota.

You know where Mayo Clinic in my country is? That's the last stop between there and heaven. You know, Goodbye little darling, I'm parting. That's the last stop.

In the mind of Americans, Mayo Clinic has the answer. If they can't fix you up, Mayo Clinic, goodbye. And so, Mayo Clinic, there it is.

Mayo Clinic says, all those people who drive thousands of miles and hundreds and thousands of miles to go to Mayo Clinic because they'll fix you up. You know what Mayo Clinic says? 70% of the people who come have wasted their time. They said, We cannot cure them with the instruments of medical science.

What their problem is, they have passed the sickness of their mind and spirit onto their body and they need spiritual healing. Huh, amazing, isn't it? Physical problems. Does the Bible say it? Here it says in Proverbs 11, 17, The merciful man, that's the forgiving man, does good to his own soul, but he that is cruel, that's the unmerciful man, troubles his own flesh.

Hmm, interesting. One prisoner. My country was ready for execution and they had him, a death sentence on him.

He was heading to the gas chamber and three days before he was going to be executed. They found out he wasn't guilty at all and they found the guilty person. After all of those years, three days before execution, he was let out.

Now would you love to have been in the press corps to interview him and ask him a few questions after he spent all that time in prison and three days before execution he gets out? What question would you ask him? You know what question. Aren't you bitter? Over all the years you spent in prison, all the money you spent on the case and so forth, aren't you bitter? You know the press corps would ask that, right? So he gave him an answer. What do you think he said? He said these words, you have to give up your bitterness.

If the state doesn't kill you, you'll kill yourself by holding on to your bitterness. You can't preach any stronger than that. Ephesians 4.26 says, Let not the sun go down upon thy wrath.

How many times have we disobeyed that? That means let the sun go down upon the wrath. You know what that doesn't mean just before you go to bed and go, dear Lord, if I've committed any sins tonight, forgive me. No, when the sun goes down, that's about supper time, isn't it? Sun goes down, supper time, about spaghetti and meatballs time, right? Or something like that for Italians.

Supper time! Don't let the sun go down upon your wrath. You know what God's saying? Don't even eat your supper with an angry spirit. Hmm, interesting.

You know what? I'll tell you what. Here's the problem. You know, our wives want to feed us so many vitamins.

We men, you know, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, all these vitamins and all the rest of it. They give us vitamins because they're going to keep us healthy. I want to tell you something.

All those vitamins, it's not what you eat that's your problem. It's what's eating you is your problem. And you know what they say? That if you eat food with an angry spirit, medical science says that if you eat a meal with angry spirit, your food, no matter how much nutrition your wife put into it, turns into poison in your system.

That's why God said don't let the sun go down upon your wrath. Don't eat supper even because of what it will do for you. Now, men and women, I suggested so much more we could say about it.

But I want to first of all say that there's some people who have physical problems. Not all physical problems relate to what I'm saying. But there are some physical problems that relate to what I'm talking about.

And can go to any doctor anywhere in the world and you'll not find healing until you settle this unforgiving spirit. What about this consequence of unforgiving spirit? You know what you do? You cause Satan to take advantage of you and your family. You open the door to Satan and say, walk in, devil.

When you have an unforgiving spirit, you see why I'm telling you, maybe I'm telling you why Charles Haddon Spurgeon saying, praying with an unforgiving spirit, you're signing your death warrant. You cause Satan to take advantage of you and move in. We say, is that in the Scripture? Sure.

2 Corinthians 2, verses 10 and 11 says these words. Paul, speaking to the Corinthians, says these words. Because they had a man there that they needed to forgive.

There was a brother in the Corinthian church that needed forgiveness. And the apostle Paul wasn't there. And he's writing to those brothers who were responsible for the situation and to deal with this brother.

He was said to them, he said, to whom you forgive, says I want you to get forgiving him, to whom you forgive, tell him that I forgive him also. Here I am, Paul. I'm not there.

I'm away. But let him know how thoroughly he's being forgiven that I want to go on record. Let brother Paul say, let him know that I'm forgiving him too.

Lest Satan should get an advantage of us. Satan already had advantage of him. But he said, let's be so thorough with our forgiveness that Satan have an advantage over us.

For we are not ignorant of his devices. Now the Bible says in Ephesians 4, 22 and 27, it talks about, it says be ye angry and sin not. It's a different kind of anger.

And sin not. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath. I quoted that verse before.

There it is. But I didn't finish the verse. Here is the last part of it.

Let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil. In that verse. See? Following an angry spirit, it's like opening the door and saying, devil, come on in.

And you're giving place to the devil. Much we can say about that. But what about the effect? Here's the consequence.

The effect on other people. The effect on other people. You cannot have an unforgiving spirit and not have it affect other people.

Affect on other people. You know, right here in Saskatoon. When the revival was on in Saskatoon, there was a lady there, came one day, one night to the meeting.

And she came that night to the meeting with the determination that if God didn't touch her that night, if God didn't change her that night, she was committing suicide because the church was right there by the bridge, by the river. And she was going to jump off if God couldn't do anything for her in the revival there. And you know what happened? She came and then we had, after the meeting, we had what we call the afterglow.

And people started giving testimonies. And she was in that meeting there. And she sensed, I'm going to cry out for help about now.

Why? What was her problem? I'll tell you what. She and her husband took in a lady whose husband had run off on her. And they took this lady into the home.

And the lady's daughter, child. And they took into the home. And you know what happened? Being nice to this lady, took her in.

In a little bit of time, the lady and her husband started to carry on. And they ran off to Edmonton together. That marriage is broken up.

They were doing a nice thing. And look what happens. The bitterness in that woman, she was as bitter as bitter can be.

Her children would go to school and they'd come home with Alice in Wonderland stories. And in that home, it was Alice in Blunderland. Because that was the name of the woman from Saskatoon, now living with her husband in Edmonton.

On and on there. She cries out for help in that situation. She cries out for help.

And it's getting near midnight. We have people sharing. She's crying out for help in that situation.

And you know, that's the blessing of when we open up like that and we have people sharing. Because there's somebody there that probably can relate. More than even a preacher.

The lay people. You people talk to each other and can relate. And they started to minister to her.

And there's a young man, 17 year old, 16 year old young fellow there. And he said, Ralph and Lou, can I say something? I'd like to say something to him. That's a free for all.

Anybody want to say? What do you want to say to the woman? Can I say it? He said, He said, I'd like to tell her. I was raised in a home just like she's raising her children. And the same thing happened.

I can almost identify totally with what that woman is talking about. Because the same thing happened in my home. And I want now as a child to tell her, as a 17 year old, to tell her how it affected me.

I said, you know what happened to me? He said to her. My mother taught me to hate that woman that went off with my dad. You know how it affected me? I turned my hatred not on that woman.

But I turned my hatred on to my mother for teaching me how to hate human beings. And that was about the last straw. I'll tell you, that woman, that was all she needed to hear.

Cried out for help. The Christians gathered around her and they prayed over her. And in that situation, God set that woman free.

And I wish I could bring her here for you to see her today. The situation has not changed one iota in relation to her marriage. But I'm talking to you about a lady.

If you'd see the smile on her face and the joy of God on her face and the family that was spared. She would be in the mental institution or in the grave today because she was on every kind of pill. The one to stay awake.

The one to go to sleep. She had been visiting a psychiatrist. She was suicidal.

You name it. She was all there and going to commit suicide that night. I wish I could bring it to you here 35 years later.

God set her free. The effect it has on others. The children, the family will be affected.

And then, you know what a consequence when you carry an unforgiving spirit? You grieve the Holy Spirit. The Bible says, Grieve not the Holy Spirit whereby you are shielded unto the day of redemption. Ephesians 4.30 And it says, How do you grieve? Let all bitterness, first thing.

And wrath, second thing. And anger, third thing. And clamor.

And evil speaking be put away from you. And malice. And be kind one to another.

Tenderhearted. Now listen. Forgiving one another.

Even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you. Grieve the Holy Spirit. Can you live a life where the Holy Spirit is grieved? How much we need Him in the day and age we live.

And then, consequence of unforgiving spirit? You bring upon yourself the judgment of Almighty God. The judgment of Almighty God. The Bible says in James 5.9 Grudge not one against another.

Grudge not one against another. Brethren, lest you be condemned. Now the word grudge in that Scripture is a jurisdictional word of jurisprudence.

It's like you're the judge on a court case. It's not just we think I have a little grudge. It's more that I'm the judge in a situation.

What a judge does, he gives the final decree. He's the judge. It's that kind of context even in the word grudge.

It says when you do it, you're going to be condemned. Why? Behold, the verse says, the judge, the real judge, stands behind the door, the Lord. And you're taking the place when you have an unforgiving spirit, you're taking the place of God in the situation.

You're becoming the judge. Like you know all the answers. You know the end from the beginning.

Only God knows that. And God says, when you take that posture, watch out, you are going to be condemned. You bring upon yourself the same judgment of Almighty God.

So, what am I really saying about this theme tonight? I'm saying it's unforgivable to be unforgiving. That's really the story. It's unforgivable to be unforgiving.

No matter how much you've been wounded men and women. I started this message, I hope nobody goes out of this meeting carrying an unforgiving spirit. No matter how much you have been wounded, and I'm sure there's a lot of wound in here tonight.

No matter how much you've been wounded, you've got to see yourself in a way that the most important thing about your whole life is the word forgiveness. That's got to be number one about you. Nothing else more important.

Somebody in one of our meetings wrote a poem and said these words, it matters not if I've been hurt. It matters not at all that sometimes from my weary eyes the scalding tear drops fall. And it matters not even if cherished friends who I've leaned upon in vain have wounded me in word and deed and left me with a pain.

That doesn't even matter even though it's painful. What does matter? What matters is can I forgive? Again and again. It's not have they been true? But Lord, have I been true to forgive them? That's the issue.

You know, the problem is at the heart of unforgiveness is pride. That's where it is, story. It's ego.

It's self. That's at the heart unforgiving spirit. Forgiveness is going to cost you love and it's going to cost you pride.

And there it is, that self-righteous spirit of pride that wants to be vindicated. Someone wrote a song, I can forgive as He forgave. The choice is mine.

Are you hearing it? You've got to make a choice. Decide to choose. Decide to forgive.

The choice is mine. Well, you say, that's my problem. I can't forgive in my own strength.

You know what? All it takes is willpower to forgive. It takes willpower to forgive. You say, well, that's my problem.

That's where I fall out. I don't have it. You know why you can't have it? Why you can't do it? Because you're talking about different willpower than I'm talking about.

You think it's your will and your power. But no, I've got a better combination. All God wants of you is your will.

The choice. Just make the choice. Choose tonight.

Say, I'm not going out that door carrying that unforgiveness spirit any longer. I choose. The choice is mine.

When you make the choice, it's your will and His power. That's the willpower. He'll prove it to you.

I say it like this. This is the real place, men and women, where Christ's power is most revealed. When He proves Himself to you that you can be a forgiver tonight.

Your choice. Your will. His power.

The answer. We had a couple that traveled with us and the lady wrote so many songs and every night we'd sing a song. It had to be her own songs.

We wouldn't let her sing anybody's songs. One she wrote. She'd tell the story in the song every night.

And one night she sang and she wrote the song, He gives me love to be forgiving. You see, it's His power. He turns my anger to be kind.

You see, you make the choice and watch God prove such a miracle in your life that will thrill you beyond degree. Well, you say, what a negative message. I want to tell you something.

This is the most positive message a guy could preach. You know what's so positive about it? Here, I told you folks that when you do forgive, you're going to get into something wonderful. You're going to get an answer to your prayer that you've been praying, probably everybody in this meeting has been praying for many, many years and finally you're going to get the answer.

What's the prayer? If I'd ask how many of you folks have prayed the prayer, Lord Jesus, I want to be like You. I want to be like Jesus. We sing songs about it, don't we? Ah, we sing, I would be like Jesus.

Earthly pleasure, earthly pleasures vainly call me. I would be like Jesus. Nothing worldly shall enthrall me.

I would be like Jesus. Be like Jesus, this my song, in the home and in the throng. Be like Jesus all day long.

I would be like Jesus. We're good at singing, aren't we? We sing, ah, to be like Jesus, to be like Jesus, all through life's journey from earth to heaven, to be like Jesus. We sing it, don't we? We say, oh, to be like Thee, oh, to be like Thee.

We sing them, don't we? We pray it, I want to be like Jesus. Make me Christ-like. Turn your Bibles.

You brought them and I, just quickly, I want you to look. Look at Matthew, and we're just about finished. But hang on here now.

Here's the best part of the night. Matthew chapter 5, and look what it says in verse 44, verse 43. And this is on the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5, 43. Jesus said in Matthew 5, 43, You've heard it said that, it's been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. That's the way the world talks.

Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. Okay. But I say unto you, verse 44, love your enemies and bless them that curse you and do good to them that hate you.

And look at this. Pray, we were talking about prayer. Pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.

Wow. That's not Lucifer's words. That's not the Apostle Paul to Saint Peter.

Those are the words of Jesus himself. The one who is the example of that for you and me. Now why? Why does he ask us to do that? That sounds like unforgiving.

That sounds like forgiving. That sounds like you're not allowed to be an unforgiver. Why, why, why? The next verse says, Why? That you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.

Hmm. You know what that means? That when people are going to see you, they're going to see that you got the same blood in you like the Father is in heaven. That you're going to be Christ-like.

That you're in the same family. You know, Ralph and I preached over in the country of Beirut, Lebanon a number of years ago and we found out that the Armenian people have long names. The Armenian people have long names.

Chorbokyan, Manukyan, Salibyan, Halibyan, on and on. Iyan, Iyan, Iyan, Iyan. All the Iyans.

And people, they came to us and they said to Ralph and Lou, do you notice anything about our names? We said, yeah, they're all too long. They said, do you notice most of our names over here end in the letters I-A-N? Yeah? See, you know what it means? Those three letters mean the son of Manuk, Manukyan. The son of Chorbok, Chorbokyan.

The son of Halib, Halibyan. The son of, in the same family way. And they turned to us and they told Ralph and Lou something and they said, do you realize we are the culture where the church was started and there's where we came with the name Christian.

Are you hearing me? I-A-N. Christ. We're in the same family with Him.

We have the same blood in our veins. And this is what it's telling me. That I am to have an unforgiving spirit in verse 44 because verse 45 says that you may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven.

So you can really say Iyan, Christian, that you've got the royal blood in you because you are forgiving. Isn't that what we pray? Lord, make me like Jesus. Oh men and women, what a truth.

And I close with this story that's one of the most amazing stories of the power of God in relation to this. Ralph and I were preaching in eastern Canada and there was a young man that God had his hand on this young man for the ministry but he also had his eyes on big money and in the midst of it, instead of going off to a Bible college and studying for the ministry, he went in the opposite direction. He left his wife at home and he went because the economy was bad where he lived at the time and he went many, many hundreds of miles to where they said the economy was good and he was by himself and in that situation there, he got involved with a prostitute and with the women of the street and he contracted the disease of the street.

Finally comes back home to his wife and has normal relationship with his wife and without knowing it he passes the disease of the street on to his wife. She was a sickly woman to begin with. And realize what had happened to her.

Realize what happened to her. The doctor said to her, you'll probably have to spend at least two weeks out of every month on the bed for the rest of your life. She'd go to the clinics and they would ask her about, where is this from? Your husband, my husband, your husband, what's going on? The shame, the pain and you know what? Number of years later Ralph and I didn't know anything about this situation.

They came to us. They had a beautiful home, big cars and all the rest of it. They had lost everything and they came to one of our meetings and they said, Ralph, we've got to talk to you after the meeting.

And they told us, they said, we've lost everything. We live in a basement suite. We don't even have couches to sit on.

We sit on a wooden bench there and almost the beds that they slept on was almost the same but we are as happy as happy can be. And they tell us the story. We knew nothing about this.

And they tell us the story. And I'm sitting there and I said, man, how come you didn't kick him out? Right? How come? You mean to tell me you're still living with this man? How come? And she said, I'll tell you how come. And they were the happiest ever in their whole marriage.

How come? She said these words to me and it's the very thing I'm saying right now. She said, when I realized what was wrong with me and what I was going to suffer for this situation, instead of striking back at him, I went that way up to him. And I remember the days that you came to our church and you preached on Philippians 3.10 that I may know him how in the fellowship of his suffering being made conformable to his death and the power then of his resurrection.

Those verses and that message came through to me as I lay on my bed. Instead of striking back at my husband, I looked up and I said, oh Lord, I'm having the privilege to get to know you like I've always wanted to know you through the fellowship of even my suffering and all of this. And while I strike at him, I'm getting to know my Lord to be like Jesus.

That marriage turned around, they went off to Bible college and now God is using that young man to win thousands of people to Jesus Christ around the world. But it happened when a lady would forgive a husband from a situation like that and I'm happy to tell you within two years time, God totally healed the wife. Set her free.

There we are. There we are. You know what I'm saying tonight? The spirit of forgiveness does what? Accepts every offense as a privilege to be like Jesus.

Are you hearing me? Are you hearing me? I want to see you sir become like Jesus. I want to see you ma'am to become like Jesus. Accept every offense as a privilege to open the opportunity for you to get to know Him and be like Him and that you are the children of your Heavenly Father and without mistake the world sees the royal blood of your Heavenly Father in you.

Blessing of forgiveness. Amen? Your prayer will be answered as you've been praying for so long. My last statement is this.

It is an unforgiving spirit is everything that God is not. Totally unlike God. Everything that God is not.

Thank you Lord for our brothers and sisters here tonight. Thank you Father for the many last night who settled the issue. And thank you Lord tonight they can understand now the blessing of it and what they've been spared and make them appreciate more tonight even than even last night.

God you gave them the courage to deal with it. What a wonderful thing. And now that you make them like Jesus in ways they've never known before.

Oh God I thank you for that. Lord I pray tonight I don't know what is before me. This is a message of warning.

This is a message of understanding. This is a message of being prepared when those temptations and the situations come in the future because we're all so human to go back to an unforgiving spirit. Oh Lord I thank you this is a warning to us.

But Father I pray for those in this meeting tonight who would say I needed this message tonight. I'm that one that does not need to go out. I'm the one that should not go out of that door tonight carrying that unforgiving spirit any longer.

Pray for me. Pray for me. Pray for me.

Pray for me. Oh God do your work. We pray for them.

We pray for them. We pray for them. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed.

How many are in this meeting say Lou? I have been carrying that hurt feeling that grief from way back. I've been carrying it. And tonight I see it.

And tonight it's going. And tonight I'm going to be set free from it. Tonight.

How many say pray for me. Pray for me. Pray for me.

Could I see your hands right now. Put them up. God bless you.

God bless you. Wonderful. There are only six hands already.

God bless you sister. Wonderful. God bless you.

Back there. I tonight am carrying that unforgiving spirit and this is the night I'm not going out that door again. God bless you.

God bless you dear one. Sir God bless you here. Yet others in God's holy presence.

Yet others in God's holy presence. Yet others. Yet others.

Thank you heavenly father for these my brothers and sisters who right now are expressing their need and their cry for you Lord. You tell us to pray one for another and we're doing that right now. And I pray in the name of Jesus.

In the name of Jesus let this be a night of total redemption in the hearts and lives of every one of these men and these women. These dear brothers and sisters who raise their hands. Do that work tonight Lord.

In this meeting. That we will be a people like Jesus. The glory to accept these things that we have been using in our life as stumbling blocks.

They become the stepping stone. When we get under the blood of Jesus for us to move on and move ahead like never before that our hearts, our lives are released from the shackles and the bondage we've been in. And we've been stuck in this issue that tonight we've been set free.

Thank you Lord that we can pray one for another. And Lord bless us as we do it tonight. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed I sense that we ought to end this meeting tonight in a totally different way.

I don't know if I've ever done it like this before but I sense God would be pleased. Do you know what I want? I want to ask all of you my brothers and sisters. One after another.

Of you dear brothers and sisters who say I need to be set free from the shackle of an unforgiving spirit that I've been carrying. Would you do something? Would you just stand up and pray for yourself out loud and we're going to pray with you. And we're going to make God's house a house of prayer where one after another you pray for yourself.

And let us hear your cry to God for forgiveness. One after another. We're the family of God and we're going to act like a family where we bear the burdens one with another.

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