

## Session IV: Learning The Art of Forgiveness

### A. Unforgiveness Is An Offence In The Body Of Christ

In our study so far we have learned that unforgiveness gives place (*topos* = territory) to the devil in the human heart. It is human nature to blame-shift and excuse our own sin of unforgiveness with self-justifying reasoning such as:

*Well, so and so is responsible and should have known better.....*

*It's really not my fault, they made me mad.....*

*They deserve the calamity that has happened to them, after all they are/did/think/caused me to.....*

*You haven't been through what I've been through, so it's fine for you to say.....*

What we often fail to realize is that the devil is called “the accuser of the brethren” for a reason. He constantly accuses other people to you in your own heart, and readily provides handy excuses to justify our ungodly thoughts and behavior towards others. In this way, if he can get you to agree to an offense with accusations and self-justifying reasonings, he gains the necessary spiritual authority from you to bring dis-unity into your own heart and thereby into the Body of Christ.

*Luke 17:1-4*

*Then said he unto the disciples, **It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!***

*2 It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.*

*3 Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.*

*4 And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.*

Offenses (*skandalon* = the trigger stick of a snare or trap, an impediment placed in the way to cause one to stumble or fall, any person or thing by which one is drawn into error or sin) will come. The accuser of the brethren (which is what the word “devil” literally means) continually seeks to bring slander, gossip, and evil speaking to your mind about another person.

Will you agree with such words in your heart? Even cleverly disguised as if they were your own thoughts, will you consent to harbor them, or will you be wise enough to violently reject them? Bear in mind that all negative thinking towards other people often leads to negative words about those people. When voiced, words become murder weapons which the devil uses against them. Why? Because words transmit spiritual power and authority (which the devil does not have until you voice the words). Therefore, to engage in slander and gossip is literally to commit murder. If you have to converse about a negative situation involving another person for the purpose of avoiding further evil, have the love and the decency to stop and pray for that negative situation and any names you have named in your conversation – and do it with an honest heart for restoration and blessing. Otherwise, keep your mouth shut, lest you be a carrier and a transmitter of offences within the Body of Christ (woe unto him, through whom they come!), and not a healer of offence.

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## B. Closing The Three Doors Of Unforgiveness

**The first door** – involves forgiving the person who “caused” the offense. I call this the front door. Whether by deliberate and blatantly sinful hurt, abuse, attack with malicious intent or not, forgiveness of that offense and the person who caused it to happen to you is not an option in your Christian walk. To forgive a person, and to utter words of forgiveness to God toward the person who hurt you does not condone their action. It merely closes one of the three doors through which the devil will enter your heart in the offense. Here’s a good model of prayer to forgive a person who hurt you:

*Father, I choose in my heart to forgive \_\_\_\_\_ who hurt me by \_\_\_\_\_. I choose to release them from their obligation toward me. And I choose to forgive them for the pain they caused me. I now cancel satan’s power and authority that he has gained over me in this issue, and I ask You Holy Spirit to heal my heart and tell me Your truth about this matter, in Jesus’ name, Amen<sup>1</sup>.*

**The second door** – that enables satan to freely enter one’s heart from offenses is the “back door.” This is the door of one’s own attitude toward the person who offended them. When another person hurts us, we often lay the blame and responsibility fully on them, and even if we “do the Christian thing” of forgiving them, we often still harbor an attitude of hurt, anger, resentment, or bitterness toward that person because of what they did to us. In essence, we have closed the obvious “front door” by praying a prayer of forgiveness of the person who caused the hurt. But we still have the back door open of resentment, and anger toward the other person in our own heart.

Thus, we must also take ownership for the lingering bad taste, the attitudes that we keep in our own heart, over the offence. Even though we have forgiven the other person, the offence still becomes sin to us. Satan uses our negative attitudes to perpetuate the offence. By forgiving the person, we closed the front door. This seems to have buried the issue. And indeed it did – deeper. Instead of being on the surface, the offence became buried deeper, but it is still accessible to satan through the open back door.

Here’s another good model prayer for closing the back door of offence, the door to one’s own attitudes:

*Heavenly Father, I ask your forgiveness for my anger, my resentment, and all of my bitterness toward \_\_\_\_\_ for what they did to me. I have already forgiven them for their actions,, and now I ask You to forgive me for the evil thoughts of my heart and for the wrong things that I took out of the situation. I take authority over the thoughts of my heart, and I cancel satan’s authority in this matter. I ask You Father to heal my heart and speak your truth to me about this, in Jesus’ wonderful name, Amen.*

**Closing the third door** – involves closing “the side door” that satan uses to affect your heart. This is the door of accusation. And when he is at work, he does it in a very subtle way. He will try to get you to agree with a negative thought process about someone, and to reach judgmental and critical opinions of them. He stays hidden, and you remain unaware of the evil thinking which he sowed in your heart about that person. Watchman Nee, in his book “The Normal Christian Life” exhorts believers to apply the blood of Jesus Christ not only over one’s sin, and sin nature (iniquity), but also over the voice of the

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<sup>1</sup> More on this kind of prayer is discussed in a powerful reference book noted in the book catalog order page at the end of this paper. [Biblical Foundations of Freedom](#) by Art Mathias is a must read for people who struggle with unforgiveness issues towards others, and also guilt and unforgiveness issues towards themselves.

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accuser of the brethren in order to shut down his subtle accusations. How about a prayer something like this.....

*Father, I plead the blood of Jesus Christ over the accuser of the brethren who is trying to accuse other believers in my heart. I refuse to participate, and I ask You Holy Spirit to reveal to me any false information, presumptions, suspicions, or accusations about other people, or about myself. I ask Your forgiveness Father for any such wrongs I have harbored in my heart, and I ask You Holy Spirit to cleanse my heart, and to heal it from such wrongs in the past, and to guard my heart from receiving any such false accusations in the future, I ask You to tell me Your truth about these things, in Jesus' holy name, Amen.*

**There may be times** – that we have to clean up the consequences of our sinful unforgiveness. There may be wrongs that we have to go and physically make right to the best of our ability. But having taken the time to close every door on each and every issue of unforgiveness which we have allowed to embitter our hearts (and thus pollute our souls – Hebrews 12:15). Going through an inventory with the Holy Spirit's prompting may require multiple visits on your knees to the throne room of grace. But doing so will lighten the load of spiritual baggage which weighs one down, and gives rise to such things as sickness, disease, and powerless Christian walks.

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