

Forgiveness – Path to Freedom

St. Augustine's mother "St. Monica" is said to have prayed bitterly and wept daily for her reckless son as she daily went to a church to pray. She saw the bishop and begged that he talk to her son to talk some sense into him - so he would not be lost to the fires of hell...and He reassured her... ***"Madam...the son of these many tears and prayers can never be lost?"***

Today I want to honor my mother... I heard my mother's prayers to God for me for years. We are all here today because it is the intercessory prayer/work of **someone else** that births Christians be it Christ's efforts, or our own spiritual parents. I want to honor and recognize **the mother of my faith**.

With that said I need to discuss a painful subject from my own hurts and my own experiential truth....learned not from books but from what I have lived and tasted...my eyes have seen and my ears heard. It is messy ugly personal there is no dignity but it is absolutely real. Please do not judge the sin but see the events through the eyes of a child and the beliefs a child could form from them.

This is difficult because to discuss forgiveness you end up discussing others wrongs?

I am not here to :-

- Slander anyone - this is just history. Our power and destiny lies in the present and the future.
- Looking for sympathy - Please no hugs or acting weird.
- Not here trying to justifying or excuse past sins - They have been forgiven by God and me.

I grew up in Jerry Springerville in a bad corner of hell and in my parent's war I had no allies.

A home ruled by a hyper-religious mother and a violent alcoholic is a dangerous place. In that place, I saw God as another tyrant called "Father" and worshipped by a weak mother that stayed in that abuse with her children, because the "bible said so." Both were bad choices.

The end of my childhood came when my father straightened out a wire coat hanger and I went for a knife and at age 14 - I cried my last tear for the next 24 years. He still tried to make good on his promise "to break me" and make me crawl. I never broke, not for him, not for anybody, while the harsh streets became my home.

I have left out telling of all the destroyed toys – butchered pets - shattered hearts - shame and degradation – blood and urine – vomit and tears - unending violence – stepmother's suicide attempts - incest and and the lies you tell to emergency room staff. The seeds of those years killed both my brothers – one with Aids and one by suicide. For years I used to point to these scars on my body as battle wounds with a sense of pride for I had survived hell. Yet the hidden scars inside were the ones far more serious and long lasting.

Outside I was bright and friendly and intelligent - In my heart there were already strongholds built to hurt, betrayal and anger that provided me the will to survive. Finally I burned every picture and photograph of my past and I left Africa. One problem - I brought me along.

I sincerely believe the kingdom of God is going to be missed for many by 18 inches. My intellect kept me alive for years and I relied on it - I had to. For the heart gets broken and exploited and crushed and so the ego builds walls to protect us - **A soft heart will get you killed in Satan's world.** The heart of a child who **does not have** the understanding of conjunctive faith.

That faith can see **through evil** and comprehend that God could be on both sides as Job finally did.

So let us talk about Forgiveness the only way out of the past and the door to freedom..... Forgiveness The act of forgiving; the forgiveness of sin or of injuries.

"To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness." Dan. 9 v 9. Isaiah 43:25 says, "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, **for my own sake**, and remembers your sins no more."

EXODUS 34 v 6 And the Lord went past before his eyes, saying, The Lord, the Lord, a God full of pity and grace, slow to wrath and great in mercy and faith; 7 **keeping mercy unto thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin**, but by no means clearing the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation.

God shows of his Glory and describes Himself - to Moses. **He is showing His blinding Glory but He is talking about His Mercy and His Forgiveness....**

God is no more God than when He forgives and I believe **His Greatest Glory** is so demonstrated, not in power or creation, not in heavenly armies, but in mercy and

tenderness and forgiveness.

SO WHY DO WE FORGIVE?

FORGIVENESS TRANSFORMS THE RECIPIENT

Forgiveness is Gods Grace to us - It is that offer of pardon to us - **It is what transforms us.**

His Mercy or Offer of Forgiveness precedes repentance. The women who wept and poured oil over JC feet - knew who she was and where she fit in the realm of things.... But Simon missed the whole point of God visiting his home. No concept of his own debt to Christ. Interesting that days after his transfiguration - more glorious than Moses seeing Gods Glory - Jesus is **attracting sinners** to weep on him while Moses repelled people with the shining of his face.

God offers us his murdered Son first - before we are born to sin and injure Him - He starts this process. The first side He shows us of Him at all is - Grace or Forgiveness. Then he offers it again and again and again for as long as we live - because we keep offending Him and His perfection. And I am glad his forgiveness of me is not limited to 70 times 7.

Saul stopped on the road transformed by Grace - maybe God said to Paul - A man by the name of Stephen's dying words to me were "To forgive you Saul and not hold his death against you?"

God said to me...." Because I have forgiven you all this and spared you and I see you as blameless - How are you going to behave now? What does this belief do to your insides and your behaviors? You who demands fairness and justice? What is your debt to me now? What can't I ask of you?"

FORGIVENESS RECONCILES PEOPLE

People will sin and injure people. Forgiveness is what reconciles us - God to us and us to each other.

The cross is the image of reconciliation - It reconciles the irreconcilable. Justice meets mercy there.

South Africa has a history worse than Ruanda or Yugoslavia - Why no Bloodbath with 2 million AK-47's stockpiled for the revolution.

I believe it was because of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

This commission travels around the country - Not a court but men on both sides of the war can come and confess their actions and they are given amnesty for confession.

People come there wanting details of their missing sons and daughters. "Tell us how our children died....We just want to know who to forgive. Tell us where their remains are, a cloth or bone fragments so we can have something to bury and get on with our lives." There horrible atrocities are broadcast nationwide with lots of tears and mercy on both sides.

Forgiveness guarantees peace for while we are forgiving, we can't have the next war. When it ends, we start laying the seeds of the next war. The Treaty of Versailles's after WW1 did not forgive Germany and in that unforgiveness and demand for reparations lay the seeds of World War 2.

WE FORGIVE FOR OUR OWN SPIRITUAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH.

We get locked into the courtroom of our mind – Awaiting Justice, an apology, Money or reparations....

We pick at unacceptable emotional wounds and we still ask God why? We don't trust out of fear of being hurt again.

A rape victim's skin crawls when her husband later touches her - Abused incested children hear of "God as Father" and the name Father sticks in their throat. When we finally forgive the sinner – It is that moment **we** finally get to walk out of that courtroom.

The drunk driver was in a black out when he killed your little girl - he has no memory of the event and got sentenced to some AA meetings and some probation. You are the one plotting his murder - You stopped praying because

God did not explain this - You now hate anyone with a drinking problem - You spend a day in tears when you go into her room and see her dolls against the wall and her empty bed. Your marriage is falling apart because you are angry and irritable and depressed.

Forgiveness frees us - **We are the one set free, not them.** I know it makes no sense but I have lived in a courtroom waiting justice for 20+ years. Forgiveness of others released me.

God said **for My own sake** I forgive - not for ours...**If He forgives for His sake**, could we not forgive for our sakes, not for the perpetrators. Isaiah 43:25 I, I am He that blots out thy transgressions **for mine own sake**, and I will not remember thy sins.

The blood of **Abel will lie crying for justice** - **"And He said, 'What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries unto Me from the ground.'** "Genesis 4:10 **The blood of injury stains our hearts – and cries for justice.** It will lay there then it will rot and a root of bitterness will grow under it. That root grows unseen under our smile and then its fruit will become evident. **Bitterness** is a root i.e. underneath the ground.

The rotting blood drying in our hearts will stink and contaminate us long after the perpetrator walks free. Forgiveness frees us today of the pain of yesterday so we can have a better tomorrow.

Injustice will challenge your faith in man and God. Just ask Job or David.

1. Vengeance is a poison we drink waiting for the other man to die.
2. Buddha said "You are not punished for your anger but **by it**."
3. Forgiveness is what I do today about yesterday for tomorrow.
4. It spreads and repeats..Rwanda, Middle East, Bosnia

WE FORGIVE SO WE CAN SHARE GODS VICTORIES

Adam and Eve were separated from God - Driven out. For the next 900 years they got to discuss "You ate the fruit!" - and He said "You gave it to me...!" At some point we say enough - **I am sorry - there is only two of us**let us get along.

My point is mans sin separates Him from God and the next 6000 years is the story of Reconciliation - A husband rescuing an errant wife - God rescuing a sinful people - the center of this whole story is the cross.

His love for Jerusalem. Over and over they murdered His attempts at reconciliation. He did not wait for them to repent - they never did - Ninevah did. He chose his favorite righteous people (prophets) and sent them die in with an attempt at reconciliation and forgiveness for them in Jerusalem. Some reward? Did He stop after the murder of the prophets.....No! He never did not learn they were not to be trusted for despite it all, He then sent them his only son. He followed a murdered Son Yeshua with apostles, all of which were to be martyred. He is still sending you and me.....

It is that quality in Him that is our only hope. And Jerusalem knew better, as they had His law and His priesthood - There is no excuse for them. But God never stopped trying - Now He again has sent us with this message of peace - Reconciliation is translated "peace" by some translations.

2 Corinthians 5:18 But all things are of God, who has made us at peace with himself through Christ, and has given **to us the work of making peace; Reconciliation**

Forgiveness is not a victim position but it is the greater strength - For you do your worst to me - with all your rage and all your spite and I respond not with greater rage, not with

a lawsuit but with forgiveness/grace. I bend in the storm like a willow, not an oak and it goes by and I remain.

Forgiveness is Spiritual and can never be defeated by the physical.

Satan murders God and his dying words were **Father forgive them** and that dying wish turns that crime and loss into mans only hope for the future.

There is such joy granted **the extender of grace** - not the receiver. The recipient may not even know they were graced. Joy is with the extender of Grace. The Injured Party is the winner - not the Perpetrator.

Lost Sheep - Lost Coin - Prodigal Son - The sheep is still a dumb sheep - The shepherd is the one who understands what just happened. The Shepherd has the party - The Father is throwing the party **He understands** who was dead and is now alive. The prodigal son had no idea about the spiritual implications. He was just motivated by better circumstances - better food as a servant.

The Finder of the coin knew the emotions loss create, and the joy of the finder. God loves sinners, **for their absence creates deep feelings of longing** in Him. His mission in life is directed to them, not the righteous, we must just make sure we realize there is none righteous and so join Him.

I wonder if God has regrets and 2nd guesses His own work? He wants none to be lost and yet **He looses and it grieves Him** - Could He have done different? **When the Story of mankind ends it is only God that does not get His wish, "That none be lost."**

Christianity is not about how we treat our friends.....**it is about how we treat our enemies.** This is a church is not Rotary club or Toastmasters. This is what makes

Christianity so radical and truly unpalatable to the normal mind.

What chafed the Pharisees was this forgiveness Yeshua handed out to wicked people. They show up sick and he forgives them. He hung around all the wrong people.

He tells Peter never stop forgiving - Never keep score, not fairness but mercy, not justice but forgiveness. The cross fulfills the law of fairness and justice and restitution and gives us the beatitudes a whole new way of looking at things. It defies all sense of fairness. You marvel at your own grace and yet you can not bear to forgive??.

Love your enemies.....Do good to those that spitefully use you. Turn the other cheek - Pray for those that persecute you.

See the world through the eyes of God - Life can not touch you in the realm of the Spirit.

In the Lords Prayer - First request of God in this prayer is actually your contract with God – “Do to me just as I do to others”

Overlook my daily repetitive screw ups *just like (in the same manner)* as I overlook others daily repetitive screw ups.

Please tell me He did not **mean AS I FORGIVE** - because then I am in deep trouble???

MATT - 6v12 And make us free of our debts, just as we have made those free who are in debt to us. **That is the contract with God.**

As we forgive so we are forgiven. His forgiveness and mercy is **His bridge to us** - Do not destroy your bridge to God! You may need it. I want a wide bridge...so I can find my way back to God - and I will need **His forgiveness** in the next 20 minutes.

Those are the only two things He makes **conditional in His relationship to us - Mercy and Forgiveness.** We get as we give.

This is a transaction between God and us. We are somehow agents of His forgiveness. When we judge someone else is not worthy of forgiveness - We have just shut the door on our own forgiveness. We are the conduits of God as we emulate Him and He works through us -- and we cannot be judging where forgiveness ends...and who is worthy of it. When we stop forgiveness **from** us we stop forgiveness **to** us! **That is a fact. When we judge the unpardonable sin in others we commit it in ourselves.**

Matthew 5:23 If then you are making an offering at the altar and there it comes to your mind **that your brother has something against you**, v 24 leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

God says “Before you do any other **religious practice even prayer - Go square the fault with your brother up and then we can talk.**

Who will ascend to Hill of the Lord - those with a pure heart - the Psalms says - Our heart and emotions cannot be full of other people's sin and blood who like Abel's cries for justice. Then we go to pretend to God that emotion is not there .”.

COL 3v13 - 13 Forbearing **one another, and forgiving one another, if any man hath a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.**

The blood of Abel cried for Justice to the ears of God - A whole legal system is set up of **“eye for an eye”** and 4 fold restitution for theft and blood sacrifices for sin.

"The blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."—Hebrews 12:24.

*Jesus last words - Father forgive them for they do not know what they doHis blood did **NOT cry for justice** – He said the hurt ended there and He absorbed it. The cycle ended. It was over. While bleeding He said forgive them. The blood was not held against them even though they cried His blood be on us.*

Today He is still saying they do not know what they do...He is now **still pleading our case** as our mediator our High Priest.

"But how can I forgive someone who has not repented . . . someone who does not think their actions are wrong?" Simply look at Jesus on the cross. Learn from your Master. He forgave those that "do not know what they do"

When we judge and condemn or retaliate some indefensible action against us - Did we read their hearts intent and understand all the pressures on their life...Do we really know what we are doing, or are we operating with really incomplete information.?

Jesus last dying words were for **mercy and more mercy for the unmerciful** who were unrepentant and should have known better. His blood **speaks of that mercy and his dying words become his life work as soon as he arose - intercession for sinning idiots.**

So how do we forgive - This is not nearly explained as well as the why's.

Most books I read are plain wrong and some excused sin and some denied sin and **forgiveness is neither.** Some like Toxic Parent and Toxic Faith blamed the sinner and **said to punish them,** so they could learn responsibility.

- First, God rediscovers the humanity of the person who wronged Him. He does this by removing the barrier created by the sin of that person.
- Second, **God surrenders His right to get even.** Instead, He chooses to bear the cost of the person's sin His own body.
- Third, **God revises His feelings toward the person.** He finds a way to "justify" the person when He looks upon him or her as his own adopted child. This restores the person's "divine image" (being made in the image of God)

HERE ARE THE STEPS TO OFFERING FORGIVENESS TO OTHERS.

1) PAIN AND AWARENESS AND GRIEF

Awareness - Demands of this painful wound. Job is saying "I got unfairly hurt" - this is not right or just. He wanted an answer. Recognize the hurt and acknowledge the wound.

2) LOOK AT GOD - SEEING MYSELF AND MY SITUATION IN GODS EYES

Jer 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you - thoughts to not harm you plans for hope and a future.

In my case God had loosed the hounds of heaven after me - Love Mercy Patience Tenderness, Endurance Longsuffering Forgiveness and the endless Grace had hunted me down into all the dark parts of Satan's empire, never fearing to stand guard over me. Love kept showing up time and time again - with a squadron of angels with one goal to protect me from myself, and from Satan, until He would reveal Himself to me.

Overwhelmed by Gods Grace and seeing His love first to me I had to re-evaluate all my relationships.....

****Both Jesus and Stephen looked up** before their request of Gods mercy to forgive their murderers. **When you look up anything is possible.** **

3) LOOKING AT THE SINNER WITH GODS EYES - BEARING THE COST OF THEIR SIN

Victor Frankle wrote "Mans search for Meaning" A Jewish Psychologist in Treblinka - wondered why only 1 out of 27 survived. He found that survivor's found meaning in their suffering. I think God recognizes this. Joseph said "God sent me here before you". Paul in Philemon says "Perhaps he ran away to Rome, so he could be converted" Finding a meaning in the suffering frees us...

Find meaning in your darkest hour - when surrounded by a landscape of pain - They say Transition is just before birth - Have that pain of yours birth forgiveness, for that is our **only hope for tomorrow** and **our relief from the pain today.**

In my process of forgiveness – I wanted to write a letter home - to tell my mom my birthday gift to her and my dead father, was Amnesty to all of us, in the hope of a better future. I wrote this letter - which took a week and I was sick when I was done. I missed meals as I wrestled with what this meant and the enormity of all that was done. It was summarized in words like - Planted in the poisoned soil of suffering and you Forged your children on the anvil of abuse.

On Atonement I was to mail this letter and a thought suddenly became real...

FORGIVENESS IS A VERB.

It is not a feeling - It is not just abandoning all hope of a better past. I could not mail this letter explaining the meaning I had found in the events of my life - **What God had showed me was that even my letter of**

amnesty was still a list of charges against the guilty...Forgiveness means we don't read the charges against them anymore - It is over....and so that letter could not be mailed.

In prayer I stepped along side my parents - I saw their childhoods and their pain. So I wrote another letter explaining how God had selected them from my conception, to be my parents, full knowing my future. I was well and God was doing great things in my life, and thanked her for her prayers for me in the years I ran with the devil. The past did not need to be mentioned anymore **and I was free.**

As the parable of the king with the debtor - God had called in my marker in and forgiven me a uncountable debt. I could go alongside my parents and any one else that had left a shadow on my life. Notice in the Parable - God calls in our debt - we do not go to him and say – "Oh, by the way I noticed that I owe you my life!" It is always the creditor - debtor's don't volunteer.

As long as I owe God a huge debt - I must assign him all the little debts owed me by other people. God will avenge those. He will collect them.

In my prayers I could reason with God for them - I am transferring that debt to God – He can collect it. I give up my right to this debt. I will not worry about it and I know longer need an apology or money from those that hurt me.

In Philemon, God Himself in the bible **sends every sinner back to us** (you and me) with that letter written to all of us - Not thundering His power but He is pleading from a position of an injured one also - Through Paul **a convict of Jesus...**God says to you and me - "If he owes you **anything charge it to my account.**"

Philemon 1v 18 - **But if he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, charge that to my account;...**

v 19 **I Paul have written it with my own hand, I will repay it:** Forgiveness is not about the other party - it is about us and God. God signed that letter of Philemon with His own hand as He sends back to us, everyone that did us wrong.

4) REVISED VIEWPOINT - SEEING THEM JUSTIFIED

It later hit me – All was as it should be and there was nothing in my past I wanted changed. There was peace and a quiet confidence for I was no more like God, than when I suffered as He did with injustice and hurt. The universe was as it should be and all had worked together for good.

All things work together for Good to those that love God...What in your life has not worked for good? What do you hold on to, that that does not fill that category in your life?

The love and grace of God gives a peace that nothing else will matter - We have embraced God and our hearts are pure and He dwells there. No bitterness or angerno blood of injury crying out for justice or vengeance.

CONCLUSION

You have a chance here to have a church that forgives and is a place of peace. The devil has the people by the throat and there sin is destroying them and their children to the third generation. Offer them forgiveness and a way to heal their broken hearts. Set the captives of sin free - not by justice but by mercy. Heal the broken hearted by pouring the love of God on them, and then they will be able to pass their hurts up to God.

May our prayer be this prayer found 70 years ago... *"O Lord, remember not only the men and woman of good will, but also those of ill will. But do not remember all of the suffering they have inflicted upon us: Instead remember the fruits we have borne because of this suffering, our fellowship, our loyalty to one another, our humility, our courage, our generosity, the greatness of heart that has grown from this trouble. When our persecutors come to be judged by you, let all of these fruits that we have borne, **be their forgiveness.**"*

This prayer was found in the clothing of a dead child at Ravensbruck concentration camp.

Amen.