

Forgiveness – A Crucial Key to the Kingdom

“ I was in prison and you came to visit me.” ~ Matthew 25:36



Jesus... the key to setting the captives free! ~ John 8:31-32

December 20, 2017

Forgiveness is a Crucial Key to the Kingdom

Dear Reader,

I pray this letter finds you growing ever closer daily to the Father, through His Holy Spirit, because of Jesus' finished work!

Have you ever felt like God the Father was not hearing your prayers? Do you sometimes reach a point where it seems you have run into a wall in your spiritual life, and can't seem to progress further? Perhaps you feel like His blessings have stopped flowing in your life? This teaching letter today might be able to shed light on all these situations. **Forgiveness is a crucial key to the Kingdom which can affect all these areas.** Please ask the Holy Spirit to minister His Truth to you today as you study the enclosed teaching.

The Word of God is very clear that **we can fully believe and receive the Father's unconditional love and His absolute forgiveness of all our sins** whenever we come humbly to Him in true repentance. There is nothing we have ever done, and nothing we will ever do, that is not already forgiven through the finished work of Jesus on the cross. Regardless of our past, God can and will use everyone who is fully committed and submitted to Him. What a priceless gift He has given us in His love and forgiveness through His Son!

Once we understand and receive this into our lives, we are able to offer love and forgiveness to others. We are commanded to forgive as we have been forgiven. **The Bible tells us we must forgive others if we want to fully receive our Father's forgiveness.** This is not optional for us as Christians, it is a requirement. If we refuse to forgive, the scriptures are clear that God will not move to answer our prayers. This is clearly covered in the enclosed teaching.

Holding un-forgiveness towards anyone for anything not only hinders our prayers, but it stops God's blessings in our lives. **Imagine a fire hose of blessings from the Father to us. When we refuse to forgive, we put a huge kink in that hose and all our blessings stop flowing!** Additionally, Joyce Meyers said "that holding un-forgiveness is like personally drinking poison hoping it kills the other person!" Bitterness, anger and resentment all stem directly from un-forgiveness towards ourselves or others. It has also been traced in medical studies to cancer and other illnesses.

Perhaps more than any other single cause, un-forgiveness severely impedes our Christian walk. **Forgiveness is a choice, and a decision, it is not a feeling. In fact, it is an event, not a process.** Choose to forgive others quickly and completely. Forgive yourself. Humbly ask others to forgive you when you do anything to hurt or offend them. Please carefully review and study the enclosed materials. It is the truth you know and actually apply that really sets your free!!!

Remember, Jesus loves you, and so do we,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen".

Stephen Canup
President

"I was in prison and you came to visit me." ~ Matthew 25:36

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Forgiving Others, Forgiving Yourself

Forgiving Others

One of the primary reasons Jesus came was so we could have forgiveness through His blood. One of the last things Jesus did was to pray to God, asking His Father to forgive those who had spit upon Him, ridiculed Him, beat Him, mocked Him, and nailed Him to that cross. We also must be willing to love and pray for those who have harmed us. We must be willing to forgive them.

James McDonald writes, “Jesus leaves no doubt that there is never an acceptable reason for un-forgiveness. He taught that forgiveness is limitless. It’s every time, all the time, forgive!” What is forgiveness? James McDonald continues, “First of all, you must understand what forgiveness is not. Forgiveness is not a feeling. You will never *feel* like forgiving. Forgiveness is a choice; it is an act of the will. Forgiveness is the decision to release a person from the obligation that results when they injure you. It is treating them as though it never happened. It is *not pretending* it never happened. It is treating them *as though* it never happened. There’s a big difference.”

Charles Stanley says *forgiveness* is defined as “giving up resentment against someone and surrendering one’s right to retaliate – no matter what the other person did.” *Un-forgiveness*, on the other hand, is “a deliberate, willful refusal to give up resentment, or an insistence that someone pay for a wrong that was committed”.

When we hold un-forgiveness towards someone, it causes a root of bitterness in us – a stronghold for the enemy. We are turned over to “the tormenters” of anger, resentment, hatred, temper, and control – all of which can lead to retaliation, violence and even murder. A seed of un-forgiveness planted in a ground of hurt gives us a harvest of pain. It grieves our spirit, torments our mind, and distresses us emotionally. All these, combined with a desire for vengeance or retaliation, hurts *us* - not the person who offended us. Often times they may not even realize their offense. This has been likened to drinking poison ourselves, thinking it will kill the other person.

“Remember, forgiveness is for our benefit,” writes Charles Stanley. “The other person’s behavior may not change. It is up to God, not us, to change others. Our responsibility is to be set free from the pressures and the weight of an unforgiving attitude... Forgiveness is a process that can be painful at times and may seem unending. But whatever our pain, whatever our situation, we cannot afford to hold on to an unforgiving spirit. We must get involved in the process of releasing others from the debts we feel they owe us. If we keep our eyes on the One who forgave us, it will be a liberating force like nothing else we have ever experienced.”

We need to come to God and *choose to forgive* the person who has hurt us. James McDonald writes, “It is not ‘I need to forgive’, not ‘I should forgive’, not ‘I’m going to forgive someday’, but ‘I do forgive this person’... After we have forgiven someone we will not bring it up again to the person we’ve forgiven; we won’t bring it up to other people; and, we will not bring it up to our self.” We may never really “forget”, but we will deliberately choose not to remember – and not continue to hold it against someone - any longer. We refuse to let the enemy win when he tries to bring it up to us in our mind in the future. Instead we will “take every thought captive”, and remind ourselves and the enemy that the person has been forgiven and released!

How do we know we have really forgiven someone? Kate Larson says, “If we recall, with bitterness and anger, a time when someone wronged us, then we’ve never really forgiven the person who hurt us. But if we’re able to look back at a situation and remember it without pain and resentment, then we have truly forgiven them.”

The decision to forgive those who have hurt us - even though we do not presently “feel like it” – is so very, very important!

Joyce Meyer, says, “We have to talk about forgiveness because the number of lives that are ruined through anger and un-forgiveness is astonishing. Some people don’t know any better, but there are many Christians who do know better yet they are unwilling to make the right choice. They live according to their feelings, rather than moving beyond them to do the better thing. They lock themselves in a prison of negative emotions and limp along in life rather than living the abundant life Jesus died to give us.”

She continues, “It’s time to get a new perspective and realize that when you refuse to forgive, the person you’re really hurting the most is you!” By holding onto un-forgiveness, you are doing nothing to heal the hurts, wounds and offenses that have accumulated in your soul from your past – they continue to fester, and become strongholds for the enemy to torment you.

Charles Stanley writes, “Do you have an emotional wound that has never healed? Maybe someone wronged you or a loved one years ago, and the injury remains. From time to time, similar situations bring the painful emotions right back to the surface. Close friends and family members may have lost patience with your inability to move on. You, too, wonder how much longer the suffering will last. My friend, freedom from hurt and anger comes only through complete forgiveness.”

Pastor Gary Delay says, “Refusing to forgive a person creates an invisible cord that binds us to that person. It binds us to every person in our lives who has hurt, wounded, or offended us whom we refuse to forgive. This prolongs the pain and deepens the wound. Until we choose to forgive these people, we will be imprisoned with and bound to them. To forgive them is to be set free to be what God wants us to be. By pardoning them we will be set free, unbound, and pardoned ourselves by God.”

Dr. Stanley said, “You can experience liberty from old wounds that now hold you in bondage. When the Holy Spirit reminds you of those who need your forgiveness, don’t ignore His still small voice (I Kings 19:12). Find the courage and strength to face the past, and willingly release others from the emotional debts you might feel they owe you. Only then will you know genuine freedom from bitterness, resentment, and un-forgiveness.”

Forgiving Yourself

It is also very important that you forgive yourself. You must choose to put the past in the past and let it stay there, so that you can be unburdened of guilt, shame, regret, remorse and embarrassment from your past, as you trust God today, for your future.

Perhaps you are feeling like I did after I had been in prison long enough to be free of all the physical effects of my addictions. I realized I hated myself for what I had done to ruin my life. I never blamed anyone else – only me – for the mistakes I made, one after another, that eventually led me to prison. In fact I was so disappointed with myself for allowing my actions to result in a wasted life that I spent many years hopelessly deep in depression, leading to several suicide attempts.

I had pushed away, and broken relationship, with all my friends and family. I was totally isolated – totally alone. Prior to going to prison I was homeless for three years. I had no material possessions other than what was in the prison's property room. I was convinced there was no hope of anything ever getting better. I was branded as a sex offender. I believed the lie of the enemy that my future would never be any better than my past.

I will never forget the first glimmer of hope I experienced as I began to accept God's forgiveness of me and the removal of all my sin – past, present and future. I had never experienced the peace, emotional freedom and mental release I felt when God showed me I must forgive myself, so I could trust Him and move forward as the "new creature" he made me when I was "born again".

I had to decide to "let the past be the past". I accepted the truth of His Word that he no longer held my past against me. He showed me I too had to stop holding my past against me. I needed to accept His forgiveness, forgive myself, and move on.

Ancient tyrants had a custom of binding a dead body to a captive as punishment, and making the captive drag the cumbersome and offensive burden with him wherever he went. Most often disease resulted, and death followed.

Similarly, the Romans has a practice of taking a convicted murderer into the desert, staking him down, and then laying the corpse of his victim on top of him. It wasn't long before the convict died of disease, exposure, starvation and/or smothering under the stench and decay of rotting flesh.

Why am I telling you this? Just as the corruption from that corpse would fall upon the guilty man until he eventually died, so does the burden of our own un-forgiveness towards ourselves eat away at us – bringing destruction, corruption and death.

As you prayerfully consider these truths, ***please choose to abandon your past.*** Or, in other words, ***"Bury your past or it will bury you."*** (Dwight Thompson)

An unattributed prophetic word from the Lord given January 28, 1996, was:

"The devil desires you to dwell on things of the past – what you have done. I have forgiven you. You would do well to do likewise."

A Prayer Regarding Forgiving Others

Heavenly Father, in the mighty name of Jesus, I repent of my un-forgiveness, and I confess it as a sin. I forgive (person's name) for (act committed – be specific), and I forgive myself for holding un-forgiveness. I take my trespasses, and theirs too, and throw them into the sea of forgetfulness. I release (person's name) to you, and ask that You bless them and show them favor.

Lord Jesus, heal up all the hurt in my heart and theirs – all the rents, tears and injuries - so well that it will be as if it never happened. Where there was anger and hate, Father, let there be peace and love. By faith, I also receive Your unconditional love and acceptance in the place of this hurt. I take authority over the enemy, and in the name of Jesus, I take back the ground I have allowed Satan to gain in my life because of my attitude toward (person's name). Right now I give this ground back to the Lord Jesus Christ to whom it rightfully belongs.

I believe I have received what I've asked you for Father, and I thank you for it in Jesus' name. Amen.

A Prayer for Forgiving Myself and for the Healing of My Past

Heavenly Father, I come to you in the mighty Name of Jesus, and I give You my past. I repent of my un-forgiveness towards myself, and I confess it as a sin. I ask You, Father, to heal my memories; to remedy the wrongs of my past; and, to turn my past into something that can be used for good in my future and in the future of others. I choose to give up my claim to my past and turn it completely over to Jesus Christ. Through Your Holy Spirit help me forgive myself and others, and put the past behind me forever. Thank you that I am a new creation walking forward into my future in Christ. I believe I have received what I've asked you for Father, and I thank you for it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Stephen Canup

FORGIVING

A Crucial Key to the Kingdom of God

God's Forgiveness of Us

One of the most important themes throughout the Bible is forgiveness – God's forgiveness of us, our forgiveness of others, and our forgiveness of self. This paper discusses God's forgiveness of us.

I was saved as a young boy in a Baptist church where my family attended. However, for most of my life I did not attend church or make any serious attempt to follow Jesus. Having previously read my testimony, you will remember that I sinned more and more, indulged in many addictions, and descended into depravity after God turned me over to my own desires and reprobation. I was guilty of almost everything Paul describes about this condition in Romans 1:21-32. Eventually my sin landed me in prison with a six year sentence.

Having been in an emotional and mental state of severe and frequently suicidal depression for years, I believed for the longest time the lie of the enemy that there was no hope of anything ever getting better. Additionally, I believed his lie that I had gone too far and done too much for God to forgive me. I was overcome with guilt, regret, remorse and shame. Have you felt this way?

RBC Ministries, in their booklet on "The Forgiveness of God" says, "If we believe our emotions, we may feel we have gone too far. Our self-contempt seems deserved. But there's hope. God wants us to believe in His ability to forgive sins we cannot forget." God is angry at sin, but "His anger is not a denial of His love...The truth is that His love is equal to His anger, and because of His love He found a way to show mercy." He sent His Son Jesus.

God's justice - which demanded punishment for sinners - was satisfied by Jesus. "The payment for our sin came at heaven's expense...God built a two-lane bridge of mercy and justice over the chasm of sin separating us and Him." When Jesus was crucified, "God accepted the sacrifice as sufficient payment for our sin. Justice was satisfied...Three days later, Christ rose bodily from the dead. By the miracle of the resurrection He showed heaven's acceptance of His sacrifice."

Our sin was forgiven. Our guilt was removed. By one man, once and for all! "Because of the unlimited scope of Christ's death on the cross, we have received forgiveness not only for past sins, but for all sins – past, present, and future...The moment we trust Christ as Savior, we are given immunity from punishment. The issue is settled: Our case is closed and God will not open the files of our guilt again. Just as the courts of earth honor the principle of double jeopardy, heaven will not judge twice those whose sins have been punished in Christ. We will not be tried again for the sins He bore in our place."

Jesus was made sin with our sinfulness, so that we could be made righteous with His righteousness. God declares as righteous all those who appeal to the death of Christ as payment for their sin. No sin is excluded. We are saved by faith alone in Christ alone. There is nothing in the entire universe more powerful than the Blood of Jesus that takes away our sin. When we do not deny the Spirit - and thereby accept by faith what Jesus did for us - there is no sin (and no sinner) beyond God's love and forgiveness.

The Bible is filled with declarations of God's love and forgiveness. In the pages which follow, I pray you will see that you and your sin are not excluded. This was a major realization for me. I knew I could start over. I found present and eternal hope, and freedom, in Jesus!

Stephen Canup

Biblical Examples of the Forgiven

(Primarily from RBC Ministries booklet, "The Forgiveness of God")

Do you sometimes wonder if God can forgive you, and utilize you? Look what He did for others:

Adam and Eve – The first humans to sin also became the first to experience God's forgiveness (Gen. 3).

Moses – Although he murdered an Egyptian in anger, God chose him to deliver His people from slavery; to take them to the promised land; to spend time personally in God's presence; and, to become known as a "friend of God" (Ex. 2,3,33,34).

Aaron – Although he was involved in making a golden calf, Aaron later was head of the priesthood (Ex. 32; Lev. 8).

Aaron and Miriam – When they opposed Moses' God-given authority, Miriam was stricken with leprosy. But they confessed and were forgiven and cleansed (Num. 12).

Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar – These men falsely accused Job and misrepresented God, but they were forgiven (Job 42).

Rahab – This Jericho prostitute turned to the Lord of Israel and became part of Jesus' family tree (Josh. 2; Matt. 1:5).

David – Although he was guilty of murder and adultery, David repented and confessed his sin. He was spoken of as a man after God's own heart (II Sam. 11-12; Ps. 51).

Matthew – This tax collector with a bad reputation became Christ's disciple (Matt. 9:9-13).

A Criminal – When he cried out to Jesus on the cross, this thief was welcomed into paradise (Lk. 23:40-43).

Peter – Though he denied Christ three times, Peter became a pillar in the church (Mk. 14:66-72; Jn. 21:15-19).

A Woman Caught in Adultery – Her accusers backed away and Christ forgave her sins (John 8:1-11).

Paul – Killer of Christians and self-confessed "chief of sinners", Paul is a prime example of the grace of God (Acts 9; I Tim. 1:15).

Corinthian Believers – Once they were idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, greedy, slanderers, and swindlers, but now they had experienced God's forgiveness (I Cor. 6:9-11).

What He did for others, He will do for you!!!

The Forgiveness of God – Scriptures and Comments

I John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

II Chronicles 7:14 "...if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

Colossians 2:13 "When you were dead in your sins and in the un-circumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins..."

Psalms 103:11-12 "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."

Micah 7:18-19 "Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea."

Psalms 32:1-5 "Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD'-- and you forgave the guilt of my sin."

Comments: Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven – "The only truly happy people are those who have received forgiveness of their sins from God, so that guilt for sin no longer weighs upon their minds and consciences. Such blessed peace is open to all sinners who come to the Lord (Matthew 11:28-29). The psalmist describes God's forgiveness in three ways: 1) He forgives the sin, i.e. pardons it. 2) He covers the sin, i.e. puts it out of sight. 3) The sin is not imputed, i.e. the guilt is canceled from the record." (from Life in the Spirit Study Bible)

Other passages on forgiveness: John 3:16; Ps. 130:3-4; Ps. 86:5; Prov. 28:13; Jer. 31:34; Isaiah 44:22; Isaiah 55:6-7.

Asking Others to Forgive Us

By Stephen Canup

In my sin, I had in one way or another offended all my family and friends. I had pushed or driven everyone away. As I began to learn about forgiveness, I sensed that I needed to get past my pride so that I could humble myself to ask forgiveness from the ones I had offended who I could go ahead and contact from inside prison. At first, it was my two brothers and my little sister. I felt a burden begin to lift off of me as I wrote and mailed those first letters asking for forgiveness.

It was a great experience to hear my name called at “mail call” for the first time in the ten months that I had then been incarcerated. My two brothers quickly answered me, and let me know they were not holding anything against me. They both expressed their regret for where I was and why I was there, but they also both asked if they could do anything to help me. God showed me that it might just be possible to receive forgiveness from others if I would just humbly ask.

With my sister, however, it took until after I had been released and walking out my Christian life for a time, before she forgave me. I had offended her the most. But, praise God, our relationship has been restored, and we are closer than we have been in a long time.

My son was the same way. In spite of the many letters I wrote him, he never responded while I was incarcerated. But in early 2013, two years after my release, God arranged a wonderful reunion meeting of reconciliation. What a blessing!

God the Father commands us to humble ourselves and seek forgiveness from those we have offended (Matthew 5:23-24). In order to do so, we must first admit to ourselves that we hurt someone by our actions or words. As painful as it may be, we must come to the point where we admit we're guilty and not make any excuses for our behavior. We need to understand the amount of pain we have caused and accept responsibility.

First, we must ask the Father to forgive us for what we've done, and ask the Holy Spirit to give us strength to communicate with the person we've hurt. In prison, I was only able to write to those for whom I had their addresses. However, I promised God that I would contact the others at the first opportunity. For those I could not reach even after my release, I told the Father I would immediately ask them for forgiveness whenever He chose to bring them across my path. I prayed for them, and asked God to bless them and heal them from the hurt I caused them.

When we make contact, either verbally or in writing, we must be honest and humble. We don't “apologize” just to make a bad situation go away. We need to clearly explain what we are “sorry” or remorseful for, without any excuses.

Pastor Gary Delay teaches, “Just saying ‘I'm sorry’ and ‘I apologize’ are not adequate in asking someone's forgiveness. These are words that recognize the problem only. They do not suggest a solution or take action to resolve an offense. Both of these phrases are grossly inadequate in regards to forgiveness. We must specifically ask, ‘Will you forgive me?’”

He continues, “The word ‘apology’ expresses regret; it does not forgive. It makes us sorry and sorry leaves us guilty. Saying ‘I'm sorry’ or making an apology does not get the work of forgiveness done because forgiveness is not about guilt, defense, excuses, pity or substitutes. Forgiveness is about reconciliation and healing.”

For example, we may say something like, “I'm sorry. I was wrong for (be specific). I sinned. Would you please forgive me? How can I make this right?” We move from a specific admission of our guilt to an attempt at a conversation about reconciliation.

Once we have asked them to forgive us, we need to let the other person respond without getting defensive. We shouldn't expect them to immediately jump up with joy (or forgiveness) the moment we humbly ask. We may need to give the person time to sort out their feelings. They may need time to be able to deliberately “choose” to forgive in spite of their “feelings”, and what may be their lingering pain, consequences or circumstances.

Even if the other person refuses to forgive us right then, we will have done what God expects us to do to try to make things right and clear our consciences. We have accepted responsibility and demonstrated that we want to change. The best way for us to respond going forward is to show ourselves continually trustworthy, and not slip back into the wrongful behavior.

Remember, the Bible shows us the Father's own Son died, so we could be reconciled to God; and we are, now, a minister of that reconciliation. We've been forgiven by the Father. We must both humbly seek, and freely give, forgiveness.

Our Forgiveness of Self – Scriptures and Comments

Matthew 22:38-39 Jesus replied, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the prophets hang on these two commandments.”

(How can we love God with all of our heart, soul, and mind in the present when we are so self-focused because of our past? How can we love our neighbor “as ourselves” today when we hate ourselves for the mistakes of yesterday?)

I John 3:18-20 “Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.”

(As we actually accept and walk daily in the truth of God’s forgiveness for us, the enemy can no longer use our conscience to accuse us and condemn us to ourselves because of our past.)

I John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

Psalms 103:11-12 “For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”

Isaiah 1:18 “Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are as red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”

(God is very serious when He says He forgives us, and chooses not to hold our past against us. If we do not do the same, are we saying that we can’t trust God? Are we better than Him – if the Blood of Jesus is good enough for Him, shouldn’t it also be for us?)

Philippians 3:13 “...But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”

Isaiah 43:18-19 “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.”

(God encourages us to trust Him for our future, as He gives us permission to put the past behind us. He is an ever-present God, here and now. When we focus on the past, we cannot love and worship Him today. He is not in our past. When we are self-focused, we cannot be God-focused. Satan uses memories of our past sins to oppress us. He wants to cripple us, and make us ineffective in God’s service.)

Mark 11:25 “And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”

(You are included in the category as “anyone”. You are not to “hold anything” against yourself.)

Matthew 6:12 “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

(We can forgive ourselves as a “debtor” because our “old man” is dead. We died in Christ when He died. Dead men no longer owe anything. Their debts are forgiven. You are not to hold your former self accountable for what a dead man did. No matter how serious a criminal’s offenses may have been, he is no longer subject to prosecution and punishment after he dies.)

Luke 6:37 “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.”

Ephesians 4:31-32 “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

(Self-judgment and self-condemnation cause all kinds of bitterness, anger and rage, towards self and others. We must show ourselves the same kindness we show others. We forgive ourselves, for the same reason we forgive others – Jesus Christ forgave us first! Don’t let feelings of guilt and unworthiness rob you of the power of Jesus’ Blood.)

“Forgiveness of self is impossible until you stop longing for a better past.”

Forgiveness towards Others and Yourself

Scriptures

Matthew 6:14-15 "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

Matthew 5:23-24 "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift."

Mark 11:25 "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

Ephesians 4:31-32 "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

I Corinthians 2:10-11 "If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven--if there was anything to forgive--I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes."

Ephesians 4:26-27 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold."

Hebrews 12:15 "See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many."

I John 2:9-11 "Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him."

I John 1:6-7 "If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin."

Matthew 18:21 "Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" **18:22** Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. **18:23** "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. **18:24** As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. **18:25** Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. **18:26** "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' **18:27** The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. **18:28** "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. **18:29** "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' **18:30** "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. **18:31** When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. **18:32** "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. **18:33** Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' **18:34** In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. **18:35** "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

James 4:17 "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins."

Does God Answer the Prayers of Sinners?

The Bible clearly states that God will not answer the prayers of a sinner unless he is ready to truly repent. We must “keep short accounts” with God for our prayers to be effective.

Holding un-forgiveness towards others or ourselves is clearly sin. Our willful, intentional sins, transgressions and iniquities interfere with our relationship with God, and restrict His willingness and ability to bless us with the abundant life Jesus came to bring us.

Mark 11:25 And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.

Psalms 66:18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear.

Isaiah 59:1-2 Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

Psalms 34:13-17 ...keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies. Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry; the face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles.

Proverbs 15:29 The LORD is far from the wicked but he hears the prayer of the righteous.

Proverbs 28:9 If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law, even his prayers are detestable.

Zechariah 7:11-13 "But they refused to pay attention; stubbornly they turned their backs and stopped up their ears. They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the LORD Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. So the LORD Almighty was very angry." When I called, they did not listen; so when they called, I would not listen,' says the LORD Almighty.

Proverbs 1:28-29 "Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me. Since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the LORD..."

John 9:31 We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will.

1 Peter 3:12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.

Matthew 15:8-9 "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men." (Jesus teaching about hypocrites)

He does not hear their prayers, but God is kind and merciful, even to sinners:

Luke 6:35-36 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because **he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.** Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

God is waiting for us to repent and confess:

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

In order to have God hear and answer our prayers we must forgive others and separate ourselves from all known sin. If we regard iniquity in our hearts, God will not hear us, for it would be sanctioning sin.