How To Forgive What You Can't Forget

Colossians 3:12,13 (NKJV)

Please turn with me in your Bibles to our scripture text this morning in COLOSSIANS chapter three. And let’s read VERSES 12, 13.

Colossians 3:12, 13 (NKJV)

12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness humility, meekness, longsuffering,

13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

INTRODUCTION

ILLUSTRATION

Several years ago THE WALL STREET JOURNAL featured a front-page article about the meteoric rise of what has been called THE REVENGE INDUSTRY.

THE REVENGE INDUSTRY caters to people who have been hurt, wronged, or cheated by someone else. They provide their customers with a variety of ways to get even.

One such business is called REVENGE UNLIMITED. COM. You can go on their website and purchase such items as A DOZEN DEAD ROSES........or.......A BOX OF FISH HEADS........or.......A BOX OF MELTED CHOCOLATES........or ........even STONES WITH CURSES ON THEM. (Don't anybody get any ideas!)
There's a revenge business in Orlando, Florida called **DROP DEAD FLORIST**. To give you an idea of how much demand there is for a business like this, **DROP DEAD FLORIST** has five full-time employees, and on Valentine's Day each year they hire six part-time employees just to fill all the orders.

There's another revenge business in Albuquerque, New Mexico called **THE VOODOO BOUTIQUE** that sells magic spells and voodoo dolls made in the likeness of the person you want to get even with.

While we can see humor in this, isn't it sad that there are businesses that feed off of and even “fuel” the unforgiving nature of people?

As Christians we are not immune from getting hurt by people. Sometimes well-meaning people, even people we are closest to can hurt us by the things they say or the things they do.

Sometimes the offences of others “sting” and “hurt” for a little while, and we soon forget about it and move on. **But then there are other “hurts” that are so deep and so painful it is hard to let go and move on.**

**A SPOUSE** runs off with someone else, and just like that (snap of the fingers) throws away a marriage of twenty or thirty years.

**A RELATIVE** we trusted “stole our innocence” as a child leaving us with emotional scars that are still with us to this day.

**A MURDERER** brutally cuts the life of a loved one or friend short through a senseless act.

**A DRUNK DRIVER** walks away virtually un-scathed from an accident that claimed the life of one of our family members.

**A TEACHER or COACH** we entrusted with the care of one of our kids, molests them.

**AN EMPLOYER** to whom we devoted the best years of our life, decides to “let us go” or force us into early retirement.
How Can We Forgive Someone of Something We Can't Forget?

If I say I have forgiven someone, but I still remember what they did to me, does that mean I haven't truly forgiven them?

We must understand that only God has the ability to forgive and FORGET sins and offences.

Jeremiah 31:34b (NKJV)  "For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Psalm 103:12  (NKJV)  "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."

Through the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, God not only has the ability to FORGIVE ALL OUR SINS, He also has the ability to FORGET ALL OUR SINS AS THOUGH THEY NEVER HAPPENED.

Because you and I are weak human beings with great limitations, our minds don't easily forget the hurts and offences of others, especially when those hurts run deep.

For the remainder of the message we are going to see how IT IS POSSIBLE TO FORGIVE SOMEONE, EVEN IF WE NEVER FORGET THE HURT.

First of all.................

I. We Must Choose To FORGIVE Than FIGHT BACK

1. Jesus Himself serves as our example in this:

   Over 500 years before Jesus was crucified, Isaiah prophesied that He would pray for His killers.
2. Some 500 years after Isaiah gave that prophecy, as He hung dying on the cross, Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Jesus could have chosen to get even with those who hurt Him.

MATTHEW 26:53,54 (NKJV) “Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that is must happen thus?”

3. Jesus chose to PRAY for those who hurt Him rather than to get even. Now perhaps you are thinking, “Well yeah, that was Jesus, He could do that; after all He is the perfect Son of God.”

4. Well let me give you another example of someone who chose to pray for those who hurt him rather than getting even.

In Acts chapter seven we read that............

After putting Stephen through the mockery of a trial and falsely accusing him of things he didn’t do, the Jewish religious leaders took Stephen outside the walls of Jerusalem to stone him to death.

With a clinched jaw, Stephen could have looked at his executioners and “I’ll get you for this! GOD, strike these men dead for what they are about to do.”

But rather than getting even, Stephen prayed, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” He chose to FORGIVE rather than punish.
5. It is human nature to want to strike back at those who hurt us or cause us to suffer. It is human nature to want God to punish them or to make them suffer like they made us suffer.

6. But we can learn a valuable lesson from the example of Christ and Stephen, and that is **PRAYING FOR SOMEONE WHO HAS DEEPLY HURT US BRINGS GREATER HEALING TO US THAN ANY SATISFACTION WE MIGHT GET IN SEEING THEM SUFFER.**

Secondly..............

II. **We Must Choose To HEAL Rather Than To HURT**

1. If your Bibles are still open to Colossians chapter three, I want you to look at **VERSE 8.**

   8 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: ANGER.....WRATH .........MALICE......BLASPHEMY.......FILTHY LANGUAGE OUT OF YOUR MOUTH.

2. Now look again at **verses 12, 13** that we read at the outset of the message.

   12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness humility, meekness, longsuffering,

   13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another, even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.
3. Do you catch what Paul is commanding us to do?

In VERSE 8 Paul is telling us to “PUT OFF” something. What is it? ANGER...... WRATH.......and MALICE.

In VERSES 12, 13 Paul is telling us to “PUT ON” something. What is it? TENDER MERCIES......KINDNESS......HUMILITY......LONGSUFFERING......AND FORGIVENESS.

4. Why do you suppose Paul tells us to “put off” anger, wrath and malice? Because these things are destructive to us physically, spiritually and emotionally.

Whereas “putting on” mercy and kindness and humility and longsuffering (patience) and forgiveness brings physical, spiritual and emotional healing to us.

ILLUSTRATION: Suppose someone handed you a bottle and on the back was a WARNING LABEL which read:

WARNING: Extremely dangerous if ingested. Will cause hardened facial expression, depression, irritability, anxiety, elevated blood pressure, weakened immune system, chronic fatigue, mood swings, and altered personality.

After reading that WARNING LABEL if you're smart you would hand that bottle back to the person who gave it to you and say, “I’m not drinking that, that stuff is POISON!”

5. Do you know all those symptoms I just read are the “side effects” of an “unforgiving spirit”? When we cling to an “unforgiving spirit” it poisons our mind.......It poisons our heart.......It poisons our spirit.......it poisons our attitude.......it poisons our relationships with people.......and worst of all it poisons our relationship with GOD.

MATTHEW 5:14,15 (NKJV) “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”
Why does God make our forgiveness from Him contingent upon our forgiveness of those who have hurt us? Because God knows we cannot have a healthy relationship with Him until we get “the poison of unforgiveness” out of our system.

6. You see, you may never forget the hurt someone did to you; but the only way to “stop the hurting” is to forgive. You can choose to HURT or you can choose to HEAL. And healing can only come by forgiving the one who hurt you.

And thirdly.......  

III. We Must Choose To LOVE Rather Than To LOATHE

1. In Mathew 5:43-45a (NKJV) “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.

2. Jesus is stating a scriptural truth here that we must all grasp, and that is the one thing that identifies us most as God’s sons and daughters is our love, even for our enemies.

3. You see, if we choose to loathe those who hurt us rather than to love them with the love of Jesus Christ, then we’re no different than those who do not know Jesus Christ.

I PETER 2:21-23 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: “Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth,” Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return, when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.”

4. The Lord never promised it would be easy to love and forgive those who have hurt us, but all things are possible through Christ who strengthens us.
CONCLUSION

When I think of someone “Forgiving what he can never forget” I can’t help but think of Tony Krantz.

As most of you know, in JUNE OF 1992 the life of Tony, and his two children, Katrina and Tony, were forever changed by the senseless act of Terry Ball who brutally murdered Tony’s wife, Laura.

Terry Ball was no stranger to the Krantz’s. In fact he was a member of the Beaver Dam Church of Christ where Tony still ministers. Just three weeks before the tragic murder Tony had baptized Terry Ball and even bought him a fishing license and took him fishing.

Tony will never forget what happened on that awful June night for as long as he lives. How could anyone forget something that traumatic. But by the power of Jesus Christ, Tony has been able to forgive Terry Ball for what he did and move on with his life.

Tony told me years ago that shortly after Laura’s murder a preacher friend told him, “This will either destroy you or it will make you stronger.”

That is true of everyone of us when it comes to FORGIVING WHAT WE CAN’T FORGET. It will either “DESTROY US,” or “IT WILL MAKE US STRONGER.”

May we choose to FORGIVE rather than FIGHT BACK.

May we choose to HEAL rather than to HURT

And may we choose to LOVE rather than to LOATHE.

(Pick up Bible and read COLOSSIANS 3:12,13 to close message)