

The Snare of Unforgiveness

by LaBreeska Hemphill



Sometime back I was told of an ingenious trap that is used in the jungle to catch monkeys. The trap is said to be a small-mouthed, see-through container that is securely fastened to a tree with a sparkling object inside.

The sparkle lures its intended victim and he slips his hand through the tiny opening. He then grabs hold of the object but with his hand clinched into a fist it won't come back through the mouth of the container. I am told that he will still be there the next day when the men come to gather their catch. The little monkey just **won't let go!!** It's beyond his reasoning to simply turn loose and be set free.

Sometimes unforgiveness catches us in a snare of Satan in the same manner. As Christians we are taught that it is important to forgive. But since God's ways goes counter to our ways, it is beyond our reasoning just how to go about forgiving someone especially if we have been deeply wounded by them.

Jesus taught us:

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:14-15).

By this we know just how necessary our forgiveness of others is. But how do we do it? How do we let go of our painful past and become emotionally healthy and mature? The key to forgiveness is found in the next scripture.

*"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and **pray for them** which despitefully use you and persecute you" (Matt. 5:43-44).*

So the key to forgiveness is to **pray for our enemies!**

How did Jesus deal with those who abused, misused, tormented, degraded, and crucified him? *He prayed for them*, exactly what he instructed us to do!

As he hung on the cross, his life ebbing away, he *didn't* say to the crowd *I forgive you*. We know that he did forgive them because he prayed:

"Father forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

When we can pray this same prayer for our *offenders*, we are well on our way to **letting go** and being set free!

I say “well on our way” because it cannot be mere words but we must pray it from the heart and that could take some time, possibly days or weeks. Our flesh draws back from such a prayer. When we have been wounded, victimized, and sorely mistreated at the hands of another, many times by someone we love and trust, to pray blessings on them and ask the Father not to lay it to their charge, is a tall order!!

Why would God expect this of us? Why would He have Jesus to teach us to do such a thing? The answer can be found in Job 42:10:

*“and the Lord turned the **captivity** of Job, when he prayed for his friends.”*

This tells me that when Job obeyed the Lord and prayed for his *friends*, Job’s own situation turned completely around! Those so-called friends were the *final straw* in Job’s story. After losing everything; family, possessions, health, dignity, his *friends* came to put the blame on him and add guilt to his unbearable pain and loss. But in obedience to God Job **prayed for them** and was immediately healed from his afflicting boils. And he was no longer **held captive** of his painful past.

If we look upon our situation with the natural eye and try to do it our way our outcome will not be the same as Job’s. We must do it God’s way. He has our best interest at heart. If we trust Him and obey his instructions then we will **let go** and will no longer be caught in Satan’s snare of unforgiveness.

One final note:

When we love enough to forgive, that is when we are most like our Father in heaven. Because love and forgiveness are the essence of His divine nature. When He proclaimed himself to Moses he said:

“...The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,...” (Ex. 34:6-7).

And Jesus said that we should show the same attributes so that:

“Ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:45).
