

December 31, 2017 AM
Pastor Ken Hepner

“Forgiveness is the Way of Life in the Kingdom of God on Earth”
Luke 4:16 – 21

Introduction:

As we turn to the Word of the Lord this morning we are studying to a theme of Scripture that is powerful, relevant to all of us, and something that God has on His heart for you and me as we conclude 2017 and stand on the threshold of 2018. Our theme is the incredible power of God that flows in human beings when the forgiveness of Jesus is poured into human hearts setting them free to love God sincerely and each other deeply! **Forgiveness is the flow of Divine Life in us and frees our hearts to genuinely love others!**

We have just walked through days of celebrating the Christmas story, which is the story of the “Incarnation of God.” Jesus Christ our Lord became a human being solely to be our Savior, our Redeemer. **The Scriptures carefully protect the vital truth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God from eternity, who “Came into this world to Save Sinners,” I Timothy 1:15.**

Luke 19:10 *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”*

John 3:16, 17 *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”*

The truth is that Jesus came to the earth, born of a virgin named Mary for one reason – to pay the penalty our sins deserve, to **Ransom** us from Satan’s power which was rooted in the **Sin** we stood guilty of and the **Rebellion** against God that is common to the fleshly nature of all people. The enemy of our souls, Satan, is called the “accuser of the brothers, who accuses them night and day before God,” in Revelation 12:10. As long as we stood guilty of sin and rebellion the accusations stood on the reality of the offenses we had committed before God!

The Bible also clearly teaches the central truth that we were helpless to do anything about our sins. Listen to these incredibly wonderful words of Paul as he writes to the Romans, as we read them together, Romans 5:6 – 8:

“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners Christ died for us.”

The Bible clearly teaches us that Jesus **Destroyed** the **Devil’s** power that was rooted in sins, guilt, and the shame we felt by making it possible for us to receive God’s gracious mercy, pardon for sins, and the flow of His divine life into us forgiving us.

In I John 3:8–10 John writes, “*the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.*”

Nothing typifies the transforming and cleansing power of God more than what is **Experienced** in a human heart, soul, mind, and emotions when we have **Received Forgiveness** for sins, debts, or offenses. Think about how clean one feels inside when a relationship that has been broken, where offenses stood between you and someone you loved, and both of you were experiencing the pain of loss, is restored and completely healed.

The reason this feels so good within us is that forgiveness is the release of the flow of **Divine Life** of the Spirit of Jesus into the human arena! Think about what the Scriptures tell us that happened when Jesus died on the cross. He was hanging on that cross guilty of all of the sins that humankind has ever committed, the wages of our sins being satisfied by His substitutionary death for us.

Everything that offends God about us was in Christ Jesus that day, and it happened before we were even born! When Jesus died for us forgiveness that was in the Father’s heart to give us, was made immediately available for all who believe and receive His sacrifice. The Bible records the temple veil being torn apart from top to bottom when Jesus died. The event is a clear picture of the truth: All that stood before God as offensive was now removed, put to death for us by Jesus, and all of us may come to Him at the “Mercy Seat” and experience forgiveness of sin, guilt, and shame!

Forgiveness from God and for one another is the very Spirit of Christ Jesus moving in the midst of us **Destroying the power of Demonic Activity**. Jesus works forgiveness in our hearts in order to destroy the enemy’s ability to bind us up in emotional prison cells, and blind the eyes of human hearts so that we cannot even see clearly let alone receive deeply the grace and mercy of God. Forgiveness is the Spirit of Jesus who is the light of the world moving in people’s hearts to destroy the presence of darkness and to bring us into His wonderful light.

- It is wrong made right . . .
- It is evil at work among people triumphed over by good . . .
- It is the mercy of God destroying sins and
- It is the love of God covering a multitude of offenses!

I. Jesus’ Opening Scripture Regarding His Ministry:

Luke 4:16–21 “*He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’ Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the*

attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'

As Jesus went into the synagogue at Nazareth, where He grew up, they just happened to be in the passage of Scripture from Isaiah 61:1, 2 which was a prophetic word about the fact that the people of God had for millennia missed the blessing God wanted to pour out in the **Year of Jubilee**. For thousands of years of God's working among them He had been speaking to them about this incredible picture of His life, that is His love and mercy for them being lived out in their midst.

In Leviticus 25:1 – 7 the Lord instituted a legal requirement that they observe the **Years**, every seventh year. In the Sabbath year the land was to have a year of rest from tilling **Sabbath**, sowing, and reaping. It was a year of God's providing for His people through an abundant blessing from the sixth year.

In Leviticus 25:8 – 17 the Lord instituted the legal requirement of the year of forgiveness, or the "Year of Jubilee." This was a second consecutive Sabbath year, the 49th being a Sabbath year and the 50th year being the year of Jubilee, during which all of God's people were to live solely on the provision of God, and not on what they could provide for themselves.

The Lord God called His people Israel to celebrate this "**law of grace and mercy**." Far too many people look at the law and violence of the Old Testament and draw wrong conclusions that God was an angry tyrant trying to get a an unruly people under control. **The fact of the matter is He was looking for a people who would be a physical demonstration of His grace and mercy!** In this law of grace and mercy, the "Year of Jubilee," a number of things were to happen in the human arena.

- a.) All **Debts** were cancelled.
- b.) All who were **Enslaved** went **Free**.
- c.) Everyone may **Return Home** to their Father's house, land, property.

Now I want to share with you a piece of information that absolutely broke God's heart: The Year of Jubilee was never observed by the people of God. This was the reason why Jesus said what He said to the people, "*Today, this Scriptures is fulfilled in your hearing.*" At long last in the heart of God the Year of Jubilee, the time of grace when debts are canceled, the enslaved go free, and all may go home again, has begun today.

The closest we get to an Old Testament fulfillment of the Year of Jubilee is in Jeremiah 34 where the city of Jerusalem is about to fall to Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah speaks the word of Jubilee to the people to cancel debts and let their enslaved brother Israelites go free. They said they would but when Nebuchadnezzar's forces withdrew they changed their minds and took their Hebrew slaves back again.

I want to give you a principle that is worth remembering here: Because there was no place given to love and mercy in their hearts they were ruled by debts and obligations. These legal debts and obligations ruled their hearts and, subsequently their relationships. **The principle is: Where**

there is no Covering of Love and Mercy debts, laws, and expectations rule the heart and life, and debts, laws, and expectations of what the person who hurt me owes me and enslave others to what we think needs to be done!

II. What Jesus Made Available to Us:

Colossians 2:13 – 15 *“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”*

What the Apostle Paul is saying to the church at Colossae, in these verses is that **Forgiveness is the Release of the Life of Jesus into the human heart, mind, soul, and body.** Where sin, sin’s power to enslave us, guilt and shame have stood in us that’s our inner reality! What God does in Jesus is to pour forgiveness out into our lives setting us free from slavery to guilt and shame, through the power of God released in His forgiveness. Paul says, *“He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the written code . . . that stood against us; he took it away nailing it to the cross.”*

Jesus began the year of forgiveness and freedom, that is the Year of Jubilee 2000 years ago when He died to remove our sins from us, to **Cleanse** our hearts, to make the **Forgiveness** of the Father God a living reality for us all.

II Corinthians 5:21 *“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*

Hebrews 9:28 *“so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.”*

I Peter 2:24 *“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.”*

I Peter 3:18 *“For Christ died for sins once for all the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. HE was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.”*

Paul tells the Colossians and all of us who are Christ’s disciples today the truth of the matter is that Satan’s Power is Destroyed through Forgiveness of sins, cleansing of guilt and shame. The enemy no longer has a legal place to stand to accuse a brother or sister of sin where the blood of Christ Jesus the very Son of God has been applied by faith in that heart, soul, mind, and will.

Those of us who have taken by faith and applied His precious blood shed for us through confession and repentance, have received Him as Lord and Savior. Where He reigns sin does not reign. Where His life is lived forgiveness reigns. I John 3:8 –10 John writes, *“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin,*

because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God."

May I ask us to think about a critical question together? When was our forgiveness sealed in the heart of God? The answer is 2000 years ago when Jesus died for our sins and was raised again in victory over sin by the power of the Father God. Before we were even born, let alone believed in Him and repented, our forgiveness was sealed!

III. Giving What We Have Received:

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."*

Ephesians 4:32 *"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as the Lord forgave you."*

Colossians 3:13 *"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."*

I have worked with hundreds of people through the years on this issue of our choosing to release human forgiveness to each other and there are numerous misconceptions I want to attempt to get at first. Please walk through these each of these thoughts with me because it is so important that we know what forgiveness is and what it isn't!

- a.) Forgiveness does NOT mean that you will be able to forget, that is blot out the memory of the offense.
- b.) Consequently, when you remember an offense done to you after you have confessed forgiveness to the one who hurt you it does NOT mean you have not forgiven them.
- c.) Forgiveness is a lengthy process of ownership, confession, and taking Jesus' provisions by faith. It is NOT a one-time event that is perfectly sealed.
- d.) Forgiveness does NOT mean you have to be best buds with someone who has hurt you in the past, especially if it involved an abusive relationship!

However, some people think they can justify waiting till the guilty person repents and asks for forgiveness before they choose to forgive them. What that means is that the one who got hurt is at the mercy of the one who hurt them. The offended person has just given room for bitterness and hurt to expand for as long as the offense remains. Forgiveness is something Jesus and we work out in our hearts before the offender even asks for it.

It is important that we remember what the Lord has clearly spoken in His Word. He gave us a law governing all of our human relationships, which too many of us tend to sit on a shelf and pretend it doesn't exist. It is the law of **Sowing** and **Reaping** in our relationships: God's people are responsible for what we choose to do when we get hurt. The Lord calls us all to choose to cover the offenses with the shelter of His **Love**.

Paul wrote we are called to “*let no debt remaining except the continuing debt to love one another,*” Romans 13:8. Peter adds in I Peter 4:8 “*Above all love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.*”

So if this Scriptural Truth is to be taken literally how do we deal with debts, the offenses people commit against us? That is a terrific question and I commend you for thinking of it here. We forgive others in the very same method as Jesus forgave us. **In forgiveness the Offended one absorbs the Offense of the Guilty One!** This is the Jesus way of life! You remember the hurt, heartache, and pain but this time you do so in order to embrace it and take it to the cross of Christ where it dies!

In our humanity we tend to think about the pain only in order to feel the hurt he or she did and nurse it in our hearts. But as Christians we are not permitted to live merely on our human feelings and ways. In the clear word from heaven we read earlier, Jesus speaks in Matthew 6:14, 15: We will not be forgiven by the Father God if we choose not to forgive people who have offended or hurt us. We are responsible to take the way of the cross and die to our rights, even the right to be hurt and offended.

- a.) Step One in Forgiveness happens when we choose to walk to the Cross and kneel before Jesus with a soft, humble, and sincere heart. We take by faith, and receive deeply in our hearts, His forgiveness for the person who hurt us, which He died to make available at the cross.
- b.) Step two in Forgiveness happens when we chose to forgive the one who hurt us from the heart, with the forgiveness of Jesus. When we make this choice we are literally set free from inner bondage to what the person did to us.
- c.) Step three in Forgiveness happens when we begin to confess that forgiveness, the love and the life Jesus has poured out into us, in prayer and the air clears between us and the person who hurt us.
- d.) Step four in the process depends on the one who hurt us asking for forgiveness, so that we can experience true and meaningful reconciliation. The reconciliation of a relationship requires both parties to come back together in forgiving love!

In genuine forgiveness we bear their offense, give it to Him, and in our hearts we **Cancel** their **Debts**, freeing them from **Slavery** to our debts any longer, probably making it easier for them to repent before God. We have freed our hearts from the guilt of the offender, and have released something of God’s life toward that person who hurt us. Remember forgiveness is the flow of divine life in the demonic realms of hurt and debts. **When debts are canceled something wonderful happens in the spiritual realms all around us.**

I began by sharing with us that where there is no covering of love debts, laws and expectations of others, both written and unwritten, are what dominate the hearts of people in terms of their relationships. Living a **Life** of **Love** means that there are no longer any ledger sheets to be balanced.

Here's how the Apostle James put it James 2:12, 13 *“Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!”*

*“Forgiveness is the Way of Life in the Kingdom of God on Earth”
Luke 4:16 – 21*

Introduction:

Our theme today is the flow of the power of God into human hearts and lives where His forgiveness is bestowed. Forgiveness is the flow of D_____ L_____ in us freeing us to love God and each other!

The Scriptures proclaim: Jesus is the Son of God, who C_____ to the world to S_____ S_____. I Timothy 1:15; Luke 19:10; John 3:16, 17

Jesus came to earth to pay the penalty for our sins, to R_____ us from Satan’s power over us rooted in our S_____ we committed and our R_____ against God. The Bible tells us we were powerless to do anything about our sins: Romans 5:6 – 8 ...

The Bible teaches us Jesus D_____ the Devil’s P_____ over us rooted in our sins, guilt, shame, making it possible for us to receive the flow of His divine life into us forgiving us. I John 3:8 – 10

Nothing typifies God’s cleansing power more than what we feel within when we E_____, and receive F_____. Forgiveness is the flow of D_____ L_____ into the human arena!

When Jesus died for us on the Cross, everything that offends God about us was in Him that day! When “The Temple Veil” separating humans from the presence of God was torn in two, the picture is; “all that stood before God about us that was offensive to God is removed in Jesus!”

Forgiveness from God and for each other is the very Spirit of Jesus moving in and D_____ the power of D_____ A_____.

I. Jesus’ Opening Scripture Regarding His Public Ministry: Luke 4:16 – 21

As Jesus went into the synagogue at Nazareth, they handed him the scroll of Isaiah 61:1, 2. The prophecy is about something the people of God had been missing for 1500 years: “The Y_____ of J_____.”

--Leviticus 25:1 – 7 taught them about the Y_____ of S_____

--Leviticus 25:8 – 17 taught them about the fiftieth year of Jubilee

The Lord called His people to celebrate “a law of mercy and forgiveness.” In the “Year of Jubilee” all D_____ were cancelled ... all who were E_____ went free, and everyone may R_____ H_____!

In the whole Old Testament we never read the “The Year of Jubilee” was celebrated! There is a reason why Jesus said, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing!”

A life principle: Where there is no C_____ of love and mercy, relationships are ruled by debts, laws, and what people owe me!

II. What Jesus Made Available to Us: Colossians 2:13 – 15

What Paul is saying in these awesome verses is, F_____ is the R_____ of the L_____ of Jesus in the human heart and soul.

Jesus began the year of freedom and forgiveness of sins 2000 years ago when He died for us to C_____ our hearts and to make available to us all His gift of the forgiveness of the F_____. II Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 9:28; I Peter 2:24 and I Peter 3:18

The truth is the people of God in Christ Jesus are set free from S_____ P_____ through the forgiveness of sins and cleansing of guilt and shame.

The truth is our forgiveness was sealed in the heart of God 2000 years ago on a Cross outside of Jerusalem when the Son of God died to set us free from sin's power to enslave us!

III. Giving to Others What We have Received: Matthew 6:14, 15; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13

The truth is forgiveness is a divine act. So let's start with what God says forgiveness is and is NOT! Forgiving does NOT mean you will be able to forget; Remembering is NOT unforgiveness; It is NOT a once-and-done thing; It does NOT mean you have to be best friends with an abuser!

“So I'll wait for them to ask me and then I'll forgive them!”

The Biblical law of S_____ and R_____ in all of our relationships! God's people are called to C_____ offenses with L_____. Romans 13:8 and I Peter 4:8

The truth is in genuine Christian forgiveness, the O_____ person absorbs and puts to death the O_____ of the G_____ one!

There are four steps to choose to take to walk in Christian forgiveness:

- 1.*
- 2.*
- 3.*
- 4.*

Living a L_____ of L_____ means there are no more debts to cancel! James 2:12, 13

Discussion Starter Questions for Home Groups

- 1. Why do the writers of the New Testament invest so much time and effort explaining the forgiveness of God to their readers?*

- 2. If someone you love asked you to describe what forgiveness is what would you tell them? How would you describe what true forgiveness is to a friend who is seeking God?*

- 3. Why do the painful things that happen to us in our past seem to linger on in our thoughts for years, even after we have been forgiven by God?*

- 4. What are some ways you think the enemy of our souls uses the sinful things we have done in the past, and our guilt and shame we feel because of sins?*

- 5. Can you describe the difference between the condemnation of the devil and the conviction of the Holy Spirit? What is evil one's goal in inviting us to feel condemned?*

- 6. In the message the point was made that where there is no covering of love and mercy, debts, laws, and what people owe us for the wrongs they have done rule relationships? Do you agree? Why or why not?*

- 7. There were a number of things stated that forgiveness is NOT. Why is it so important for us to know what forgiveness is NOT?*

- 8. There are four steps to genuine forgiveness shared in the message. Which one or ones are the more difficult to walk through? Why?*

- 9. Read together aloud Ephesians 4:20 – 32 and share insights you have regarding what Paul tells the Ephesians true Christian forgiveness is.*

- 10. Read together aloud Matthew 18:21 – 35 and discuss insights you have, as a group, about the fact that our forgiveness we receive must be genuine and it must affect the way we chose to live going forward!*