

Turning the Crap of Life, Into the Fruit of the Spirit

Forgiveness

Forgive, To excuse for a fault or an offense; pardon. To renounce anger or resentment against. To absolve from payment of (a debt, for example).

When I was looking for a job out of college, I applied for just about every job that even remotely seemed like a fit for my skill and education. Needless to say, I received more rejections than opportunities. Even when I got interviews it was difficult because I didn't have the experience people were seeking. With each rejection I re-focused. Even going so far as to get a large corkboard for my office and putting each letter up as a constant reminder that I wanted to make each of those companies pay for not hiring me. I wanted to make such an impact that I would get a chance to have a job offer without soliciting if from one of those companies. Not for the chance to work for them, but to have the chance to tell them that they had their chance and lost it by not hiring me. Over time, I began to realize that this was causing me to be more jaded, angry and seeking vengeance was only hurting me, not them. They had no idea I was mad, they had no idea that they had missed out on a great employee, all that knew was me and it was affecting only me.

This is how we are with forgiveness; it so easily becomes a problem just for us. The person we don't want to forgive may not even know we haven't forgiven them. We spend all our time being angry and wanting vengeance to show the person that hurt us that they made a mistake in hurting us. When we do that, when we do not forgive others that have hurt us we end up damaging our relationship with others, and more importantly with Christ.

LIFE QUESTIONS

Are you experiencing a lack of forgiveness? Is there someone in your life that you need to forgive? Is there someone that has treated you in a way that isn't Christ-like even though they claim to be a Christian? Are you refusing to forgive them? Does your life seem difficult because of your lack of forgiveness?

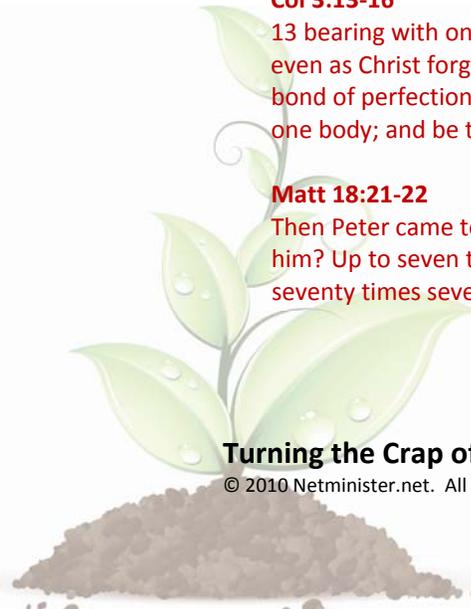
1. Forgiveness is a conscious choice we make

Col 3:13-16

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.¹⁴ But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.¹⁵ And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

Matt 18:21-22

Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven



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It is a decision. Simple and plain, we have to decide to forgive. It is our choice. We make that choice through a decision of our will, which should be motivated by our obedience to God and His command for us to forgive. We are told to forgive, forgive one another because we have been forgiven. Christ has chosen to forgive us and in turn commands us to be obedient. Going so far as to say that if we love Him (Christ) we will obey His commands (1 John 5:3). Just like deciding to hold back forgiveness from someone, we have to make the choice to provide that forgiveness. Only after doing so can we have that peace of God that will rule our heart.

Are you struggling because you don't have peace in your heart? Do you know if you have made a decision to forgive someone, regardless of whether they deserve it or not. Notice, scripture doesn't say that we give forgiveness to those who deserve it, to those that are contrite and ask for forgiveness; instead we are to seek out the opportunity to forgive even those that do not deserve it.

2. Forgiveness allows me to be forgiven

Matt 6:12

12 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Matt 6:14-15

14 "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Mark 11:25-26

"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. 26 But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."

They don't deserve to be forgiven! And you are probably correct. But even if they did something horrible, mean and even downright evil, we are warned, noticed warned, that if we do not forgive, God will not forgive us. It doesn't matter what they have said, what they have done or how they have hurt you, God says you forgive them if you want Me (God) to forgive you. If for no other reason, we should be able to forgive people for our own personal selfish purpose of being forgiven.

"Well you don't understand what she said about me." "You don't seem to get what was done to me." "Apparently, you fail to fully understand the pain this person put me through, how they hurt me and my family." Guess what? I don't know. I don't understand nor do I truly have the ability to empathize with you, but I know who does, and that is Jesus. Even on the cross, when He was being crucified for our sins, innocent – and yes He was innocent, He still asked that God forgive those who were doing it to Him. Forgive when you are in the midst of being hurt and meaning it, WOW. That is what Jesus did for us, how could we do any less? And if we do, we should know that nothing we ask in the way of being forgiven will be heard. And if you think that is tough, imagine standing before Jesus and trying to explain why your pain was worse than His.

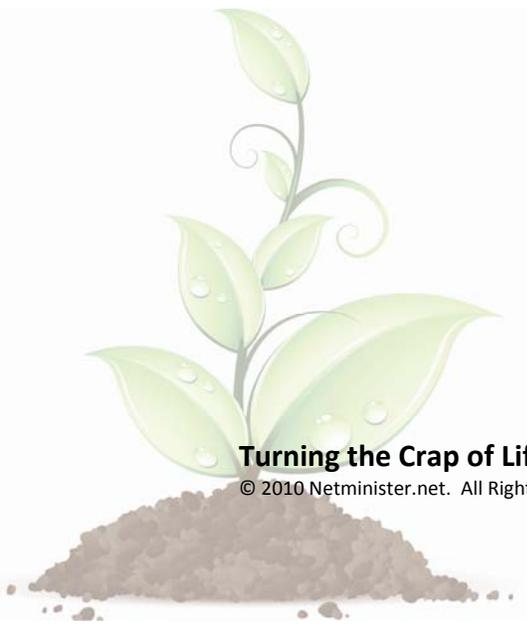
Without forgiveness we begin to experience that root of bitterness, which may by all accounts be justified. That root leads to anger, anger leads to pain and pain leads us to being numb not only to God's will but to the basic needs of our life. Have you ever known of someone hurt at church that decides that they aren't even going to come back to church? Really, who are they hurting? Not the church, even if they were a great giver they aren't hurting the church. People come and people go. Who are they hurting? Themselves. Just like we hurt ourselves when we refuse to forgive. And we are hurting

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ourselves in more ways because we are putting a block between ourselves and God. Every wonder why your prayers aren't being answered? Have you someone to forgive?

Final Analysis: What choice will you make today? Do you choose to refuse your forgiveness? If so, are you really ready for the lack of forgiveness from Christ? Are you sure you want to experience a life where God refuses to forgive you for the things you have done wrong? You may not deserve forgiveness but Jesus offers it as a free gift. Will you accept it and extend it to others? Even those that do not deserve it?



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