

Far Above Rubies



Let it go!

Two men were complaining to each other about their wives. “*She really annoys me*”, said

one. “*Whenever we have a row she gets historical.*” “*Don’t you mean hysterical?*”, the other queried. “*No, I mean historical. Every time we argue, she says ‘Remember the time you did....’*” We may laugh, but you and I know there have been times when we have chosen not to forgive and have harboured unforgiveness in our hearts.

Unforgiveness is a choice. It is a deliberate act of the will. When someone has wronged us or our family, we make the decision whether or not to forgive them, usually dependant on the severity of the hurt caused. Forgiving someone who destroyed your business, or who has caused a split in your marriage, or injured a loved one is extremely difficult but we must do it or it will destroy us! It has been rightly said that refusing to forgive someone is like taking poison and waiting for the other person to die. In Matthew 6 v 14-15 Jesus warns, “*For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*” When we refuse to forgive those that sin against us we are denying the whole principle of forgiveness. We are all sinners saved by grace!

Unforgiveness is destructive and is a product of anger. When someone sins against us it seems only natural to get angry with them or even seek revenge. A prime example of this can be seen in the familiar story of Joseph and his brothers. In Genesis 37 v 3 we read that Joseph was his father’s favourite son and Jacob made him a special coat. When Joseph’s brothers saw that Jacob loved Joseph more than them, they became full of hatred and jealousy. Things escalated when Joseph, very unwisely, shared a couple of dreams with the family in which they appeared to be bowing down to him, and so his brothers conspired to kill him. We should never underestimate how dangerous anger and jealousy can be, as we see from Proverbs 27 v 4, “*Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming; but who can stand before jealousy?*”

Thankfully Joseph's brothers did not kill him but sold him to passing slave traders who took him to Egypt. To cover Joseph's absence, his brothers caused Jacob untold distress by telling him that he had been devoured by a wild animal and they showed him Joseph's blood-stained coat. These actions would not only have caused the brothers to live in fear and dread of being found out, but would have marred their relationship with God. These are the consequences of sin.

Despite all the hurt and damage caused by his brothers, there is no record that Joseph held any resentment or bitterness towards them. In Gen. 39 v 3 we see that the Lord prospered Joseph in Egypt – and his master, Potiphar, put him in charge of all that he had. Joseph's circumstances soon changed, however, when he was falsely accused and imprisoned for a number of years. Still Joseph kept his heart right before God, who granted him favour with the prison keeper and placed all of the prisoners under his care.

When Joseph interpreted a dream which Pharaoh had, regarding an impending famine, and offered a solution, Joseph was released from prison. He continued to know the blessing of God as Pharaoh made Joseph governor over all the land and his recovery plan proved very successful. When the famine spread to Canaan and Jacob learned that they were selling grain in Egypt, he sent his sons to Egypt to purchase some. Totally unaware that Joseph was the person selling the grain, his brothers came and bowed before him, thus fulfilling the dream that God gave Joseph. They did not recognise him, but Joseph knew immediately who they were. Without going into the details which led to their reconciliation, we see in Gen. 45 v 1-2 that when Joseph made himself known to his brothers, he could not control the love he had for them and he wept. Joseph chose to forgive his brothers unconditionally and brought blessing to all of the family, not least to his father Jacob who was ecstatic that he was alive!

As Christians we must never forget that we did not earn or deserve God's forgiveness – it was a free gift from God. We cannot afford to harbour unforgiveness in our hearts, but need to deal with it as we see in Col. 3 v 12-13: *“Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness and patience. Forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.”* Ultimately forgiveness is not an option. The price of unforgiveness is too high!