

Forgiveness

סליחה

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I believe the Bible to be the complete, authoritative, inspired and inerrant word of God. That is my basis for this article and all the articles that I write. Since the bible lays out God's redemptive plan for our lives, naturally the bible describes the intricacies of relationships between men, women, and children and the ultimate purpose we were created to have a relationship with God. So it is important to use the bible to examine our lives and the issues we have to deal with whether good or bad. Though we are redeemed in God's Messiah Yeshua, we still have to live in a sinful world; so the issue of forgiveness comes up because it is a part of our relationship with God and also our relationship with our friends and family. Forgiveness is one of the most important issues we must deal with in life; otherwise our relationships would become unbearable and our life miserable.

Introduction

In the midst of our lives here on earth, the question of spiritual truth comes up in all cultures. We can see throughout history different cultures raise and fall, communities are made by various families coming together, working together, living together in peace and taking care of each other and being concerned for each other's welfare. There is one word that can describe what is going on and it is the word "relationship." We were created, designed by God, with the ability to have a relationship first and foremost with God, but also to have a relationship with our friends and family, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives. A consequence of every relationship however is the chance that something might be said or done which will hurt and damage the relationship we have.

In the scriptures, the very first relationship that man had with God was broken because of the sin of disobedience. Disobeying God's command caused the intimate relationship Adam had with God to become broken, and at the same time cause animosity between Adam and his wife Eve. This is demonstrated by the cutting accusation Adam made against Eve trying to play the blame game in Genesis chapter 3:

Genesis 3:8-11

3:8 They heard the voice of ADONAI, God, walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, so the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of ADONAI, God, among the trees in the garden. 3:9 ADONAI, God, called to the man, "Where are you?" 3:10 He answered, "I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself." 3:11 He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I ordered you not to eat?" (CJB) Gen3:12 The man replied, "The woman you gave to be with me - she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." (CJB)

A broken relationship with God resulted in a broken relationship with one's spouse which is pretty evident by Adam's response. The question I have is whether having a

broken relationship with your spouse can in turn cause one to have a broken relationship with God? Can our unforgiveness of friends and family have a direct impact upon our relationship with the Lord? As we investigate this further, we will find out this in fact does happen. Furthermore, not only can it affect our relationship with God there is an even greater danger unforgiveness can have which has eternal consequences. The eternal consequence of unforgiveness can be a determining factor in our salvation, whether we will receive forgiveness from God our Father for our sins or not.

If we were to step back and look at the entire Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, in a few short sentences, how might we describe the most important thing God wants us to walk away with after having read the entire bible?

The entirety of the bible can be summed up in that we have come into a broken relationship with God because of sin. However, God provided us a means for redemption according to the Torah in his Messiah Yeshua (Jesus). God demonstrated his love for us by the sacrifice of his only son, Yeshua, so that by faith we can have salvation through the forgiveness of sin.

It appears the process of sin and redemption is a reoccurring theme in the bible because it directly relates to our relationship with God. So what is redemption?

According to Oxford's thesaurus:

redemption

► noun

God's redemption of his people: SAVING, freeing from sin, absolution.

Redemption is the purchase back of something that had been lost by the payment of a ransom. In the B'rit Hachadashah (New Testament) there are many passages which refer to the Messiah's sufferings under the idea of a ransom or price and the resulting secured purchase of our redemption. (*See Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Gal. 3:13; 4:4, 5; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; 1 Tim. 2:5, 6; Titus 2:14; Heb. 9:12; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; Rev. 5:9*) The idea linking these scriptures together is the reference to that of payment made for our redemption. According to the scriptures our debt to sin is not simply cancelled, it is fully paid. The Messiah's blood or life which he surrendered for us is the ransom by which the deliverance of his people from servitude of sin and from its consequences is secured. Reading through the B'rit Hachadasha it is clearly demonstrated that the Messiah saves us not by the mere exercise of power, nor by his doctrine, nor by his moral influence but by satisfying divine justice (Leviticus 11:17), reconciling us to God. In this God exercises mercy towards sinners. So God has set the example but is this all there is to it? Do we simply believe Yeshua is our Messiah that he died for our sins and raised three days later from the grave victorious from sin and nothing more? I have to say there is much more to it than that, our faith and salvation in Yeshua is only the beginning.

Only the beginning because what happens is we find ourselves in the newness of life that God has designed for us now in faith. And as you know, life goes hand-in-hand with relationships. Relationships with God, with mothers, fathers, siblings, and spouses, but the difference is today in this newness of life the behavioural patterns, how we relate to

people, and even the very nature of our thought lives have been altered because the living Word of God has now come to dwell within our hearts.

Discussion

So now we have laid the groundwork for the basis of this article let's state the problem explicitly.

Problem statement

“Can ones relationship with God be affected by having a broken and unforgiving relationship with our friends and/or family?”

I would like to begin by analyzing the nature of unforgiveness. Why one would choose not to forgive? Unforgiveness is a very difficult issue; the reason is it works upon our pride. Under certain circumstances, unforgiveness can give a person a sense of power – the power to make the offender pay, either to make a person pay for what they have done or to make them see the error of their ways according to our opinion of right and wrong. Forgiveness can also be difficult, especially if we feel by forgiving someone we are opening up ourselves to more hurt. Sometimes unforgiveness can be a means for building a wall of protection around our hearts which provides for us a way to not get caught off guard the next time something might happen which hurts. The source for unforgiveness is rooted in a judgmental attitude, I say a judgemental attitude because it really is impossible to judge someone if we do not know the heart of the person who has offended us. (However, under certain circumstances this may not be a problem) When we sit in judgement of others and harbor unforgiveness in our hearts we not only loose connection with God but also we lose a compassion for our friends and family with whom we are supposed to have an life long loving relationship with as brothers and sisters in the Messiah Yeshua.

With Eve in Genesis chapter 3, Satan planted seeds of doubt about God's goodness while at the same time accusing God of withholding something good from her. When we think about forgiving those who have hurt us, what does Satan tell us today? Satan says “if you forgive, they will get away with their hurting me, they will not think they did anything wrong, and they will even do it again unless someone stops them.” This is an example of our own feelings working against us, and how Satan can use our feelings against us to draw us farther away in our relationship with God. Because harbouring unforgiveness, hate, anger, resentment, animosity, etc for others are emotions which do not draw us close to the Lord, they take us away from Him. Forgiveness and its dependence upon our heart is a very serious issue, so serious that Yeshua discussed this frequently in the scriptures, the following are a few examples.

Matthew 6:14

6:14 For if you forgive others their offenses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; (CJB)

Matthew 18:34-35

18:34 And in anger his master turned him over to the jailers for punishment until he paid back everything he owed. 18:35 This is how my heavenly Father will treat you, unless you each forgive your brother from your hearts." (CJB)

Mark 11:25-26

11:25 And when you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive your offenses." 11:26 But if you do not forgive, your Father in heaven will not forgive your offenses." (CJB)

So why do you think forgiveness hinges so greatly upon the forgiveness of others? The reason unforgiveness hinges so greatly upon the forgiveness of others is because it is an issue of the heart. By being unforgiving of others we are planting a doctrine of Satan in our hearts. This doctrine which is rooted in anger and hurt is about judging people in such a way that brings a very serious accusation against God. The accusation against God says "God, you are not doing your job, you are not good enough, you have been inadequate for me and for my life and therefore I am taking over, I am now in control, please leave me alone because I will now be god on this one and I will show you a thing or two." By being unforgiving one is saying God is not good enough in his provision for our lives.

Unforgiveness not only breaks our relationship with God but it also creates a great burden for our lives. Everywhere we go we carry this burden of hate and resentment towards our offender. Carrying this burden not only effects and hurts us and our relationship with God, but it also effects and hurts those around us (our loved ones learn from our unforgiveness and begin doing by our example if we do not break this cycle).

Can we hate our neighbour, hate our family members, hate our enemies and love God?

Yeshua taught us to pray for our enemies, and those who persecute us (*Matthew 5:44*), we cannot hold onto unforgiveness and expect intimacy with our Father in Heaven. If you have wondered what has held you back from growing in the Lord, hearing his voice, enjoying his presence, I strongly plead with you to look at the unforgiveness in your heart. Spiritual growth comes at a cost ... is the cost of unforgiveness worth it?

Yeshua felt unforgiveness was such an important aspect in ones relationship with the Father in Heaven that he warned against even making the offering before God if ones heart was not right.

Matthew 5:23-24

5:23 So if you are offering your gift at the Temple altar and you remember there that your brother has something against you, 5:24 leave your gift where it is by the altar, and go, make peace with your brother. Then come back and offer your gift. (CJB)

The temple sacrifice was the means by which through faith one would receive the forgiveness of sins. In this example, Yeshua tells us that before offering your gift go

make peace with your brother, then come back and offer your gift. There is obviously a spiritual impact upon our relationship with God when we hold unforgiveness in our hearts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I want to ask the question: “how are you joining hands with Satan when you refuse to forgive?” Unforgiveness has dangerous consequences, both emotionally, physically and spiritually and these not only affect us but also those around us. Forgiveness is about letting God fight our battles. We see in the Torah great men of the faith, Abraham, Moshe, David, each knew without God they were not able to win, or even fight effectively. As believers we have to allow God to work in our lives, and to be in control of our lives. If we decide to take matters into our own hands, we will begin to suppress our feelings and become distrustful of others. This will lead to unhealthy relationships; by hiding negative feelings they eventually will come out and will be unleashed upon those you love. I have to say that forgiving someone is not condoning what they do but rather laying the situation before God and asking him to deal with it according to his will. God has seen what has been done, what we need to do is to come to the place where we are willing to forgive the person and move forward and leave the burden in God’s hands.

Rather than taking vengeance in our hands let us do according to God’s word and allow the Lord to cleanse us from sin and trust God to make justice and righteousness prevail. The following verses from 2 Chronicles has been an encouragement to me during times of trouble, not only putting into perspective God hearing our prayers by us having humble hearts, but also reminding me that keeping my focus upon the Lord is the most important thing I can do in the midst of trouble.

2 Chronicles

7:14 then, if my people, who bear my name, will humble themselves, pray, seek my face and turn from their evil ways, I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin and heal their land. (CJB)

Prayer

Heavenly Father,

I praise and glorify your Holy Name. You are perfect Lord and I confess that I have not forgiven as you say I should, I have not forgiven as you have commanded me to. I now forgive those who have hurt me in the past. Please forgive me and cleanse me from my sin of unforgiveness. Please help me to entrust the people and problems that have hurt me into your hands Lord. I ask that your will be done in my life, help me to keep my focus and my thoughts upon you Lord and not upon the angry feelings that well up within me when I think upon the past. Please Lord give me the strength to continue on loving those who have hurt me, and praying for those who persecute me.

In Yeshua the Messiah’s name I pray. Amen.

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:

Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,
“Yeshua” King Messiah for ever and ever