

August 9, 2020 James Gallaher Sabbath Series: Forgiveness Leads to Rest

Sabbath began at creation – the seventh day of rest. It is a provision that God has for His people that will carry us through every day of our lives. We need God’s provision of rest especially in these anxious days. Doctors say that a significant part of anxiety and stress is related to unforgiveness. Forgiveness is important to experiencing rest and it has a long list of health benefits.

It is an active process of a conscious decision to let go of negative feelings whether or not the other person deserves it. We tend to often hold forgiveness only for those who are worthy, but none of us are deserving of the sacrifice of the cross – forgiveness.

Mercy and forgiveness are used interchangeably and are mentioned over 500 times in the Bible. The concept of forgiveness is in the 1000s, so we should place a high emphasis on it. **Matthew 5:7** *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*

As long as there are relationships in our lives, there will be a need for mercy. Forgiveness is a choice and not to be offered only to those who deserve it. Jesus willingly went to the cross because of my sins. Jesus chose to restore relationship! We need to also choose to forgive whether deserving or not.

Luke 17:1-5 *He said to His disciples, “It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble. Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ forgive him.” The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!”*

How many of us need an “increase in faith” in order to forgive? There will be stumbling blocks in our lives. Jesus says to forgive seventy times seven (490), but 490 is not the point. It doesn’t matter how many times an offense comes up, our response should be forgiveness. The good news is that God will never ask us to do something that He has not equipped us to accomplish. God wants to fulfill all that He has promised in each of us. It takes a belief and an understanding on our part. We can give mercy because it was first given to us. We didn’t deserve the mercy He gave to us. We are blessed to give mercy to others. It is the gospel that what Christ did for us, we should do for others.

Psalms 103:10-11 *He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His loving-kindness toward those who fear Him.*

Are we grateful for this forgiveness, loving-kindness, and mercy?

Matthew 6:9-13 *Pray, then, in this way: Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

Jesus asks us to forgive “as we also have forgiven our debtors.” Jesus is asking the Father to treat us with the same mercy that we have treated others. Be willing to forgive undeserving people in our lives to experience rest. Understand forgiveness as getting that thing out of us (like exhaling it) and removing those things from our lives. Forgiveness allows what happened in my past to not affect what God wants to do in our future.

Can we experience Sabbath apart from forgiveness?

Unforgiveness keeps us connected to a painful part of our past and won't allow us to get all that He has planned for our future. Each of us has painful things of the past. When we respond to that pain with forgiveness, then a miraculous change takes place. His mercy is poured out and the blessing of rest happens.

Why do we want to keep that wound alive? Time does not heal all wounds. Unforgiveness doesn't go away over time if not dealt with. It turns to bitterness and begins to affect every part of our life, influencing our joy, our peace, and our relationships. Forgiveness allows us to move beyond those things. It does more for us than for the person forgiven. It will always set us free.

How?

Look up the story of Ruby Bridges, a six-year-old civil rights hero. She was the sole African American chosen to begin integration at one elementary school. She faced protesting parents, yelling names and inappropriate words to this six-year-old. Ruby walked past the protestors not understanding all that was happening. Kneeling and talking to the Lord always made it better. She prayed for her enemies knowing they needed prayer – Please forgive them for they know what they are doing. Ruby was taught Biblical truths in a way that she lived them out.

Matthew 5:43-44 *Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you.*

Express our pain to the Lord and then pray “for” them. Do we pray about them? Do we ask God to disrupt their lives? Or do we pray for their good? Forgiveness begins at the cross and recognizes how Jesus forgave us. Our painful moments of life will need an “increase in faith.” It requires faith to trust that offering to others what they may not deserve is the key to our Sabbath. It is the very foundation that our rest is built on.

It is hard to give what you haven't received. We need to be forgiven to be able to offer forgiveness to others. The cross of our Savior paid the penalty for us – provided forgiveness. We didn't earn our forgiveness. We can only receive from Jesus. Peace is found in Jesus.

I John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* **Romans 10:9** *That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*

Allow His sacrifice to be enough! That's the whole point of the gospel: whatever Christ has done for us, we should do for one another.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I believe You are the Son of God. I believe that on that cross You took my guilt, my sin, and my shame and You died for it. You faced hell for me, so I wouldn't have to. And You rose again to give me a place in Heaven, a purpose on Earth, and a relationship with Your Father. Today, Lord Jesus, I turn from my sins to be born again. And now, God is my father, Jesus is my Savior, The Holy Spirit is my helper. And Heaven is my home. Amen.

*Are you harboring something against an individual?

*What person is stressing us out? What past pain should I let go of? What is causing me to be angry, or keeping me awake at night, or causing a separation in relationship?

*What does it mean to ask God to forgive our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors?

*What are some enemies today that we need to forgive and pray for?