

## Boiling Point

When I was about 12 years old, my brother had a hamster named Happy. One day Happy got out of his cage and we couldn't find him. We had a hamster lost in the house for several days. We didn't sleep well because we were afraid he would crawl on us. Have you every tried to sleep with a hamster, mouse or snake loose in your house? Did you sleep through it? If you have a hamster in your house or a mouse in your house you do whatever you can do to get rid of whatever it is.

In the case of Happy the lady who was cleaning our house took care of it. She did not know we had a hamster on the loose. Happy ran across the utility room floor and Bernice yelled "Rat" and beat happy into oblivion with a broom. She rid our house of Happy and from my brother's perspective, happiness that day.

We are in a series called "Change of Heart" where we are looking at things that we hoard in our hearts and we are looking to see what God teaches us in the Bible about cleaning out the junk in our hearts.

We wouldn't think of leaving a snake or hamster running loose in our homes, but in our hearts we are far less proactive. All kinds of things get stuck in there and we don't address them. Things get lodged in our hearts that can destroy marriages, finances, relationships, business, families and others. Yet we don't do anything about it.

We seem to have no problem sleeping through the junk hoarded in our hearts that can destroy us and those around us. Jesus our cardiologist wants to teach us to guard our hearts. When he points something out to us, He expects us to act on it.

So when we find things in our heart that we have hoarded there, we should bring them out into the open, expose them, admit that they are harmful to us and join Bernice by beating them into oblivion. That is what this series is about.

Today I want to talk about what I believe is one of the most common and most dangerous things that get lodged in our hearts. We are going to examine anger today.

All of us experience anger. Anger in and of itself is not a sin. Jesus got angry. He turned over tables in the temple and chased people with a whip. He blasted those who claimed to follow God but just used Him to follow themselves.

Anger is a normal part of the human experience. You and I will get angry. In Texas we call it being bowed up or locked, loaded and lookin.

So we all know that at times we will get angry and God knows that too. But we also know that there are some people who are just angry all the time. They are just angry people. It seems they have been angry since birth- Texas phrase "came out cussin"

They are just mean. Everyone knows it. People walk on egg shells around them. They carry their anger from day to day, situation to situation, and person to person. Their fuse it seems is always lit.

The strange thing about anger is that all of us know what it means to get angry in a moment and most of us know what it means to carry anger through life from relationship to relationship.

Some people have allowed anger to grow roots in their heart. They have stored anger up and hoarded it. It has become a part of who they are. They no longer see it, but everyone else does.

Friends, if they have any left, and family if they have any left....step around their anger all the time. No one enjoys being around them. Most will not. The few remaining are usually innocent bystanders...they take the brunt of anger, but the anger is not really about them.

Find three people who know you and ask them...."Am I an angry person" and if they step back before answering...then you know. My grandmother used to say, "If three people call you a horse, get a saddle"

Those hoarding anger will light up on anyone who happens to stroll into their path. These folks engage in road rage, physical assaults, verbal assaults, and move from job to job, relationship to relationship and often jail to jail or drug to drug or drink to drink....and often don't even remember who they are angry at or what started their lifelong pursuit of numbing that pain.

If you have hoarded anger in your heart, you no longer see it, but everyone else does. You leave a wake of damaged relationships, hurt feelings and sometimes physical trauma behind you....and you never see it. You are just angry that people don't treat you like everyone else. You go around madder than a junk yard dog and no one wants to be around you.

Very few people come to the realization on their own....you know what...deep down...I am just an angry person. Usually it takes a jail cell, a divorce, or a child's look of fear for you to see it.

But the good news is that Jesus says you don't have to live that way. This anger that you have stored in your heart, that you don't see, but everyone else is tip toeing around....needs to be dealt with. Jesus wants to clean this junk out of your heart.

Just like we have discussed with almost all of the heart issues....you think you are angry because of your circumstances...but..

Anger is not an issue of circumstances. Anger is an issue of the heart.

We choose to get angry because of circumstances and because of what people say and do to us. But the truth is that anger is not something to be blamed on circumstances because anger is a heart issue.

You choose to respond to a particular set of circumstances with anger which means you have control over how you decide to manage anger and you can, as we will learn, get rid of your anger.

And if you are not motivated for you to do that, I promise you that the people who live with you are really motivated for you to figure out how to do that. They are the ones that catch the brunt of your anger on a daily basis.

Let's look at our first verse today and you may identify with the first two words.

Please turn to Ephesians 4. Written from prison by Paul, a man who knew what it meant to go through adversity, these scriptures give us hope. He says, the Scriptures teach, and Jesus underscored that there is a way to get rid of anger. You don't have to carry it with you because,

Ephesians 4:26 (ESV) 26 Be angry

There it is Honey. It's a command. That is going to be my life verse. I am just following the command of Scripture. Paul said to Be Angry and I am really good at it....so don't argue with me about it....Paul said to do it...I am obeying. It is important to know that the word be here is present imperative. It means to be angry in the moment but don't hold it long. Maybe we should keep reading.

Ephesians 4:26 (ESV) 26 Be angry and do not sin;

I think Paul knows what he is talking about. Remember he is writing this from prison. Often we preach the lessons we are living. I think Paul is doing that here. He is in prison and is probably not thrilled about it. Paul says that there are going to be moments when you get angry.

There are going to be moments of high energy and high levels of frustration. You are going to be angry. The command isn't don't ever be angry. The command is once all that surfaces and once you feel all that energy and frustration go ahead and get angry.

But the real question is not, what do you feel? The real question is what do you do with what you feel?

Are you able to be angry and not sin? Are you able to be angry and not hurt someone else? Are you able to be angry and not pay back or lash out? Are you able to be angry and not have it impact your relationships? Be angry and do not sin. Then Paul gives us a word picture.

Ephesians 4:26–27 (ESV) 26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,

In other words, don't allow yesterday's anger to carry into today. The point is to carry your anger as short a time as possible. Be angry if you need to be angry, but be angry only in the moment. But don't carry your anger into the future.

We know that there are anger issues you cannot resolve before the sun goes down in the course of a 24-hour period. But the intent of this Scripture is very clear.

Get rid of your anger as soon as possible.

If possible don't even allow the sun to set on your anger. Certainly don't carry it from one chapter of your life to another chapter or from one relationship to another relationship. The implication is that we don't have to because there is a way to get rid of it. Now listen to the reason why Paul believes that this is so important.

Ephesians 4:26–27 (ESV) 26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil.

Most Americans believe in God but very small percentages actually believe in the devil. I believe in the devil because Jesus did and I go with what Jesus says.

I believe that the devil is working hard to distract you right now from hearing and applying this message. This is so important. Listen carefully.

He says that when you carry anger, you open a door to the devil and you give the devil an opportunity. As long as you carry anger, the door is wide open for the devil to influence me and to impact your heart.

Now you don't have to believe in the devil to know that people who carry anger live lives that seem to bring havoc everywhere they go. Because free flowing anger is detrimental to all relationships.

We all know that. Carrying anger is like asking the devil to help your anger penetrate all of your relationships. The people in your life may have had nothing to do with what started your anger, but they get wounded from the shrapnel from your repetitive anger bombs.

Another way to look at this is to go back to our model of a debt to debtor relationship, the relationship balance that we spoke of in relation to guilt. Anger is probably the best example of this imbalance. Do you remember that guilt says, "I owe you"?

Anger says, "You owe me."

The angry person lives their life through the filter system that says you owe me. This is so important, whenever you are hurt, whenever you are offended, whenever you are mistreated there is a sense in which the person who hurt you or offended you took something from you.

If you grew up in a home where Mom or Dad took off and left, they took a piece of your childhood from you. They robbed you of the opportunity to grow up in a home where there was a Mommy and a Daddy. They robbed you of your reputation with your friends. They robbed you of security.

If your husband or wife left you, there is a sense in which they owe you your first marriage. Because you stood at the altar and you made a promise. You made a covenant. You established something that you thought would continue for the rest of your life and they robbed you of the opportunity to finish with the person you started with.

When a spouse commits adultery there is a very real sense of loss and having something stolen from you. That intimate bond between a husband and wife. The shared experience of intimacy reserved for just the two of you. The trust that you placed in that person. The image that you had of you bond with one another.....stolen. Never to be given back.

We see it in churches; in fact, we have seen it at Remnant. We are a church family. We love each other hard. We share the ups and downs of life. We depend upon each other. We make commitments to each other to do life together. We covenant to use our gifts for each other and to share our resources and finances for God's work at our church. Then someone decides to just walk away...to go somewhere else...or to walk away from God....The future you planned for you spiritual family is taken away. There is a very real sense of loss.

In all of these and many other similar circumstances, there is a very real sense that they took something from you. Every time you are offended or hurt there is a sense that something was taken from you. So consequently your anger says, You owe me. You owe me. You owe...me.

. You owe me a reputation. You owe me a childhood. You owe it to me to have been at my wedding. You owe it to me to have been at my graduation. You owe it to me to have stayed with my Mom or Dad. You owe it to me to raise our children with me. You owe it to me to keep our marital bed sacred. You owe it to me to be doing life with me. You owe me. You owe me!

So in a sense, anger is not just like an open door, anger is like an open account. I am a bookkeeper and according to my records, you owe me.

I am not going to close this account until I get paid back. As long as that account is open, you are carrying that anger.

The worst thing that we could do is to allow the sun to set not on a day, but to allow the sun to go down on a season of my life. To carry the anger that has gone on from one season in my life, into a new season of life.

To take the anger created in childhood and carry it into adolescence; then from adolescence into my single adult world; then into a marriage; then to carry the hurt from a first marriage into the second marriage. Whenever you allow the sun to set on a season of your life and you carry anger with you into the next season, you run the risk of relationship and self-destruction.

Once you move to the next season it is very easy to lose sight of the source of your original hurt. You begin to project those feelings on the people who are in the new season of your life. These people are around you and they are walking on eggshells because the least little thing ticks you off.

You would tell them that it is because they said this or they did that, it is you and everyone around you knows it. They are thinking, "I don't think this is an "us" problem. I think you brought this into the relationship. I don't think our relationship caused it. I think there is something in you that you brought with you from hurts past.

I think you were angry before we got married, or before we went into business together, or before you joined this church, or before we were friends and you just brought it to the relationship and you think I am the source of your issues. I think it was in you when you got here."

When you carry anger from one season to the next, it is so easy to lose sight of the original source of your hurt and that is why the Scriptures warn us to not let the sun go down on your anger.

In addition, every time you bring your anger forward into a new season your anger not only carries forward but also it magnifies in intensity

Don't let a season of your life come to an end and carry anger from one season to the next. Because when you do, after a while, you will find yourself angry with people and you will blame them for how you feel and they may not be the original source.

Which means that they can never do anything to give you permission to close your account with your hurt, because that account is not with them.

I see this in marriages all the time. If you are engaged right now and you are engaged to an angry person, I don't care how handsome or beautiful they look, I don't care how much money they have, I don't care how they make you laugh, you need to run. They must address their anger and resolve it before you make any commitment to them.

And you say, but I am in love...I would say get over it. Because you need to make a decision to either get over it now or they are going to crush it out of you later. You are going to be blamed for things you can't even understand.

It is going to be a mystery to you and no matter how hard you work, no matter how hard you try, no matter how many times you apologize, you will never get the sense that they have closed the account because the account is not even with you.

You are just bumping into wounds they brought into the relationship. They don't even know it and it is not even their fault, but they are carrying their anger from season to season. The sun went down and now they have lost sight of the original source of their hurt and anger.

Have you ever thought about choosing to marry a hoarder...have you thought about what it would be like to move into a place where there is all kinds of stuff..that they don't see....don't address....and don't try to get rid of?

Most of us would say...you know what...when you clean all this stuff out and make room for me...then we can share our life together, but you have some work to do to clean out all of this stuff you have ignored.

In the same way, someone who is carrying their anger from one relationship to another...is hoarding it in their heart....and it is not allowing you in.

You think you can fix it for them but you can't. Because they are not angry at you...not yet...they will erupt on you...but their anger is actually with someone else...you just happen to be in the way.

We see it in churches too. Every year one in ten Christians change churches. One church disappoints or hurts someone. Rather than addressing the resultant anger they move on to another church. They carry their hurt and anger from one season to another, in this case from one church to another.

The churches never measure up because the issue is not with them. They cannot close the account on a debt that they did not cause. Often people lose sight of their original hurt.

. They don't reconcile what happened in the church that hurt them and eventually find that the only church that can meet their expectations is a home church- their home church or no church at all.

That is why if you leave a church you should make every effort to leave well and make sure that you are not running from conflict or hurt.

I believe that 90% of people who leave a church do so due to unresolved anger...and usually the church they leave...is not the church that they are angry with. They have hoarded church anger from a previous experience and you are in the way. The new church is great...for a while...then the anger erupts again.

God loves you so much that He desperately wants you to close the account to end it and put it to rest. Because your choice to carry your anger into another season of life is not simply devastating to you, it destroys the people that you love the most.

So here is what Paul, from prison, writes to us about the issue. We are still in Ephesians 4 but skip down to verse 31 and look at another command from the NIV.

Ephesians 4:31 (NIV84) 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

That is pretty clear isn't it? Get it out! Get rid of it! Throw it away. Get it out of your heart! It is interesting when you look at it in the original Greek language because Get rid of it literally means, Get Rid of it. Get rid of all. Every bit of it. All what?

bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Remember the dude writing this is sitting in prison and has a hundred reasons to be angry!

Paul is saying, You need to take your anger out and dump it.

But you may be thinking...it is not that simple. We get all tangled up in who is to blame and how it happened. We want to be soothed as a victim. We want others to know how we have been hurt. How we were right and they were wrong. We can't just dump our anger because they owe us!

We have to be paid back. We have to shame them or let others see how much they have hurt us. It is a debt that you never really feel is adequately paid. But anger is the pill that you take hoping to poison someone else and all it does is destroy you.

I find it interesting that when physicians tell patients that they have cancer, their only thought is how do we get rid of it. But when it comes to the issues of the heart, we spend so much time on defending it and explaining how we got it rather than focusing on how do I get rid of it?

We defend why we are entitled and justified to hang onto our anger rather than making it go away. We must have a desire to rid our hearts. Our attitude should be like this: If there is a cure for this, if there is a way to get rid of it, I am ready to get rid of it. I don't care who is to blame, I need to dump my anger.

Part of the issue with releasing anger is I am letting them off the hook. Did you not hear the first part of the message? They owe me. They hurt me. If I just say ok and I am just going to get rid of it then they are off the hook and that is not fair.

You must understand this, anger bypasses the issue of fairness and bypasses the issue of being paid back. Fairness and getting paid back are not the supreme value anymore. Just like how you got cancer becomes irrelevant once you have it.

Getting rid of anger is more valuable and more important than getting paid back or being treated fairly.

My priority is to get rid of it, not to get it all worked out on the balance sheet. So Paul says, I want you to get rid of your anger. Then listen to what he says next.

Ephesians 4:32 (NIV84) 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another,

Now here is the big issue. Here is the key antidote to anger. Here is how you get rid of the anger that is eating through seasons of your life.

Ephesians 4:32 (NIV84) 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other,

Wait a minute. I have a story that goes all the way back to childhood. I was a victim.

I know but how long are you going to carry it? You have carried it through three seasons of life, two marriages, and three churches; do you really want to get rid of this?

But your heart would break if I told you my story.

I am sure all of our hearts would break but do you want to get rid of it? Then you have to forgive.

But they don't deserve to be forgiven.

Exactly we already said that this is not about fair, it isn't about payback, it is about getting rid of it because it is hurting you.

Do you remember when we talked about the antidote to guilt, confession, and we spoke of how it is so misunderstood? The antidote to anger is forgiveness and it too in very misunderstood. Do you know what forgiveness is? It goes back to the debt and debtor relationship.

The antidote to anger is forgiveness. Forgiveness is simply to cancel a debt.

Let's talk about forgiveness because I think we often do this poorly. Forgiveness is not forgetting.

Forgiveness is not acting like the hurt never happened.

Forgiveness says that what you did was wrong, what you did was hurtful, what you did was sinful, what you did was horrible, what you did ruins my trust in you, what you did has serious consequences that will not go away.

Forgiveness means that I am totally aware of the action, the consequences, the intent, the hurt, the damage and the loss of trust, I have tallied it all.....I have counted every drop of the hurt....but

I am giving up my right to ever use this against you or bring this up again to hurt you or to help me.

Forgiveness is hard work and you almost never feel like it. In fact, forgiveness is the engine of obedience and the feelings are the caboose. If you wait until you feel like forgiving someone you will never forgive them.

Forgiveness is an obedience issue. It does not come naturally to us and the power to do it effectively comes only from God.

You do it because it is commanded of us and you have to keep doing it. For most situations it is not a one time thing, you have to constantly monitor yourself to forgive.

If you are in a relationship with someone and you have asked for forgiveness and that person keeps bringing up the mistake you made, they have not forgiven you. When you agree to forgive someone you absolutely cannot bring up that topic again to leverage the relationship.

No matter how badly you want to take that bullet out of the past to load your anger gun, you have made a commitment to God not to do so. If your disagreements with people extend beyond the current issue and reach back into the past to reload ammunition from past hurts, you need to work on forgiveness.

So wait a minute....I just let them off the hook? Do you know what they did to me...what they took from me...the pain I have been in...my reputation...my virginity....my sense of safety...my health...I am just to let them get away with it?

Total forgiveness? Just like that? WHO DOES THAT?

Ephesians 4:32 (NIV84) 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

We must forgive...in the same manner that we have been forgiven.

Jesus let you off the hook...Jesus allowed your sins to be forgiven...Jesus not only forgives our sins...He paid the punishment for our sins....So to answer your question....Who Does That? Jesus...every day....for everyone.

We are to forgive others...just as...in the same manner...to the same degree...with the same release...that Jesus gave to us.

Matthew 6: 14-15 (ESV)14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Mark said it this way,

25 And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." Mark 11:25 (ESV).

What goes around...comes around. You will not be clean with God if you have not forgiven others. In other words, when Jesus rules your heart, He leaves no place for hoarding anger, bitterness, and resentment.

He commands, he does not ask, he does not politely request, He commands His followers to forgive and yes He knows that you do not feel like it. That is why the path to follow Him and do life His way is narrow.

Then once Peter, I love Peter who boldly rushes in where others remain silent,

Matthew 18:21 (ESV) 21 Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?"

Peter asked Jesus essentially ok, how many times do I have to do this. When can I choose to not forgive them? When can I finally obliterate them like Bernice attacked Happy? When can I finally get revenge? We can I move from forgiveness to payback?

Matthew 18:22 (ESV) 22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.

Ok 490 times...so I can smack them after 490 times?

Jesus wants to make sure they understand it...so He tells them a parable....a short story with a big message.

Matthew 18:23–25 (ESV) 23 "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. 24 When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 25 And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made.

This is a huge debt. If he had to see his wife, his children and all that he had...He owed the master a huge debt. A debt he could likely never repay.

Matthew 18:26–27 (ESV) 26 So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.'

Interesting...the man begs his master to let him pay it back and both of them know...he will likely never be able to pay it back...the debt is too large...He owes it and He deserves the punishment for it. He has no chance...no hope...there is nothing he can do.

Matthew 18:26–27 (ESV) 27 And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.

Notice what has happened here....He didn't say ok start trying to pay me back. You owe me and I am the keeper of the books...This is the debt..you pay it back

No...He forgave the debt....what does that mean? He tore up the books...He shredded the account...This debt never has to be paid because I am choosing to release you.

No one else can do this...I am the one you owe...I am the one in charge of the balance sheet. You can't pay me back...the only way this gets resolved is when I decide to no longer hold it against you.

Why does the Master do this?.....We are told...out of pity. He had compassion for him. He understood his condition....This man could do nothing to help himself...He has a debt he cannot pay....He had the ability to release his shame and guilt...it is out of pity that he forgave.

Matthew 18:28 (ESV) 28 But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii,

100 denari.....this is a small debt about \$15-20.

Matthew 18:28 (ESV) 28 But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.'

So you see the parallel. The Master, God, forgave a huge debt that none of us could ever pay back....He didn't demand anything...He just...look at us....looked at how pitiful we were in our sin nature...and forgave us. Now this man..can't forgive someone who owes them almost nothing in comparison.

Matthew 18:29 (ESV) 29 So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.'

The man doesn't ask to be relieved of the small debt...He promises to pay but needs more time.

Matthew 18:30–31 (ESV) 30 He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt.

This was the standard punishment at the time for failing on a debt. Essentially the man is saying...I have been forgiven a huge debt...but you will pay me every cent you owe me...I will not release you..until the entire debt is paid.

Matthew 18:31 (ESV) 31 When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place.

This is interesting. I am so glad that Jesus included this little side note in this parable. This man's anger...this man's lack of forgiveness...was noted by those looking in. They saw someone who had been forgiven everything who could not forgive a small debt.

Remember the context is anger. You owe me. When you, who claim to be forgiven, hold a grudge, demand payback from others, retaliate in anger...and demand to be right....You reveal the ugliness of anger that you have hoarded in your heart. Everyone sees it.

Matthew 18:31–33 (ESV) 31 When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. 32 Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33 And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?'

Matthew 18:34 (ESV) 34 And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt.

Note something critical here....Do you remember why the Master forgave the debt originally? He had pity on him. Do you notice what motivated this move...putting him in prison? In ANGER his master delivered him to the jailers.

There is a righteous anger that comes from God. What makes God angry? When you who are forgiven much...can't forgive the little owed to you by someone else.

Matthew 18:35 (ESV) 35 So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

Do you see it? Where does forgiveness come from....your heart.

Interesting, another step of obedience that originates from the heart. It is to decide, ok according to the records here you owe me. But I am canceling that debt. You don't owe me anymore.

What you did hurt me. What you did was wrong. What you did makes it hard for me to trust you. But Jesus commands me to obey even if I don't feel like it. So I will do so, not because you paid me back, not because you made it right, not because you deserve it, But I am deciding...DEBT CANCELLED.

You don't owe me. You should have been at my wedding. You should have kept your hands off of me. You should have stayed sober. You should have been there when I was a teenager

You should have kept your vow. You should have kept your word. You should have been a church that was more Christ-like. You should have stayed in our church family. You should have...but you didn't.

And for years I have lived with the idea that you would make it up to me but I have made a decision. You don't owe me anymore.

You are forgiven. I am deciding to cancel the debt. I don't feel like it but I am choosing to do what Jesus tells me to do because I trust Him with my heart.

Forgiveness closes the door to the accuser. Forgiveness closes the account. Forgiveness breaks the power of anger and it is the only thing that does. Keeping an open account does nothing for anybody.

Just like with confession and guilt, you may want to push back on this one too. My situation is complicated. My situation is different.

People false accused me. People mocked and hurt me. People stole my future. People lied about me. People set me up.

Paul knew that you were going to suggest that your situation is unique and different. So Paul decides to put it in context.

Ephesians 4:31-32 (NIV) Forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Paul says ok you want to tell us your story, I want you to forgive like God forgave you, what was your story again?

When you realize Christ's story. When you realize what He endured to allow you the chance to be forgiven. When you compare your struggles to His. When you realize that He forgave. When you think about Jesus from the cross saying Father forgive them for they know not what they do. You begin to realize that you have no story.

No reason to keep any account open. Your divorce, your hurt, your issues may have been only 5% your fault. It could be that the other person is 95% responsible for what happened to you.

But Jesus had no part in your sin. Your sin was 100% your fault. He was blame...LESS. He had no guilt. You and I had an open account with God and it did not look good for us.

You know the story. We were dead in our sins. We had sinned against God and we owed Him a lot and could not pay Him back. God deserved perfect and once you fall from the mark of perfect you make it up. You can never be good enough to make up for imperfect. While we were dead in our sins,

God decided that they can never pay me back anyway, so I will decide to close the book and decide FORGIVEN, NOT GUILTY, YOU DON'T OWE ME. Oh yes there is just one problem.

Somebody had to pay for your sins. So not only did I decide to forgive your sin, God says, I sent my Son to die for it. Not for his sin but for your sin.

So God says, Tell me your story again. Well God, I don't really have a story. I have some anger. I have some pain. I have some hurt. I have some rejection. I have a lot of energy and emotion. But if you can close the account on me. Then I can close the account on the people who have hurt me. That is your command Jesus and I said I would follow you...not me.

Now you know this but let me say it out loud for all of us to consider. You do know that you really can't get paid back anyway, right? You do realize that, right?

You can be mad at your dad because he was not there for the first half of your life when you were a kid. But if he came into your life today and said how can I make it up to you? You would look at him and say, you can't. I can't be 16 again and you can't give me your relationship with my mom back.

The truth is that even though you are here Dad, Mom, ex husband or ex wife, or whomever hurt you there is no way you can ever make up for the pain you caused me. You can't make it up. You can't pay me back. It is undoable.

We can't go back in time. You can't give me my childhood back. You can't give me my first marriage back. You can't give me my reputation back. You can't undefile our marriage bed. I appreciate the apology, but in terms of getting things squared, you can't. These are debts that can't ever be paid.

So God says, I have an idea. Why don't we just close the books? Why don't we just let it go? Why don't we just say you don't owe me

Why don't we just forgive because forgiveness breaks the power of anger and forgiveness starts raking out of our heart all the crud and all the junk that we have hoarded?

It is understandable why it is there, but it does not serve you in any good way.

So How is your heart? Are you mad at anybody? Do you have a short fuse and don't know why? Have people asked you, what are you so angry at? Do you find yourself going off on the smallest little thing? Do you find yourself blaming everyone around you? Do you think everyone is against you? Do you find you are lashing out at people and no one is listening to you anymore? You think no one cares, but they are just protecting themselves by getting away from you. Do you really want to stay bitter, angry and alone?

Would you be willing to do some heavy lifting? Would you be willing to ask yourself some hard questions? Would you like to be free? Would you like to do what Paul instructs, just get rid of it and refuse to allow anger to reside in your heart for the rest of your life?

How long are you going to continue to live like this? Will you carry your anger until you die?

We are going to spend the next two weeks exploring the antidote to anger....we are going to learn about forgiveness. Total forgiveness that moves the anger we have hoarded in our heart. God wants to set you and me free from the anger that holds us back.

You have the opportunity to decide, it is just a decision, but it is all yours...Debt canceled. I am closing that book and I am closing the door because I am not going to carry this into another season of my life.

If we can do the more difficult heart work now, here is what is going to happen. You will go through this and you will forgive, but those old emotions will occasionally surface and you will immediately hold that thought captive and say, NO, the debt is cancelled.

You will feel like paying back the people that have hurt you in your past, but you will train yourself to stop and remember that they don't owe you anymore.

If you do this, the day will come when you see that person, and to your surprise, you will feel differently about them and it is going to shock you. You will probably realize it afterwards. When I saw them I didn't feel what I use to feel. When their name came up I didn't feel like I had to add to the discussion. What has happened to me?

It is simple. You are free. Your heart is clean. You forgave. You canceled the debt. God has restored you because forgiveness breaks the power and energy of anger in our lives when it is done right.

Is everything ok in your heart? Would you be willing to poke around a bit and make sure God doesn't want to reveal something to you? Because above all else, guard your heart because it is the wellspring of life. Let's pray.