

THE POWER OF RECONCILIATION

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We see throughout Scripture that the very nature of God is one of reconciliation. This is evident in many ways, including the following:

1. His relationship with Israel.
2. His relationship with His creation and provision of salvation.
3. His emphasis on forgiving.
4. His desire that we might be ministers of reconciliation.
5. His instruction to walk in unity.

His Relationship With Israel

When Israel walked in rebellion, He was always ready to forgive when they repented, and He restored them to a harmonious relationship. He is a God of peace, of mercy and of love. Some of their rebellious ways included wanting meat when God’s daily provision of manna was all they needed. Desiring a king to rule over them, as was the case with all the other nations, when the will of God was that He would be their King. Taking wives of the heathen nations was forbidden because these unions would draw them away from the God of Israel. Yet, they did exactly what they were instructed not to do. That disobedience resulted in what we read in Psalm 106:35–38, “*But they mingled with the Gentiles and learned their works; they served their idols which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons, and shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan*” (NKJV).

They chose to reject the report of Caleb and Joshua after they had returned from spying out the land and hankered to return to Egypt, the land of oppression. This act of rebellion is summed up in the statement, “*They entered not in because of their unbelief.*” Yet, in spite of all their disobedience and rebellion, God did not reject Israel as we see in 2 Chronicles 7:14–15, “*If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. Now mine eyes shall be open, and my ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place*” (KJV). God is always interested in, and is always looking for, the restoring of relationships. The key to reconciliation is repentance and forgiveness. God’s purposes were motivated by a heart of love for Israel.

His Relationship With His Creation

When sin entered into the world through the disobedience of Adam and Eve, we see the immediate result of that on the entire creation. The curse that God brought upon the earth (Genesis 3:14–24) remains to this day. While this has troubled the earth and all of mankind since the original sin, we should note that the sign of reconciliation with man and God’s entire creation is shown immediately after Adam and Eve are driven out of the Garden of Eden. Genesis 3:24, “*So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way*

(entrance) of the tree of life” (NKJV). The fact that the tree of life remained and angels were sent to guard it indicated that God’s divine plan was already in operation, and that it was undoubtedly a plan of reconciliation. There is one thing that we need to remember about the plan of God. It is comprehensive and all-inclusive. His restorative plan includes the entire creation, not just a part of it. Christ’s sacrifice on Calvary was the remedy for man’s sin and for the curse that followed. The tree of life, which was once forbidden so that man could not partake of it in his fallen state, is now made available through Christ’s obedience and sacrifice. It is Calvary that makes restoration possible. It is Calvary that makes a way back to God for degenerate man.

The curse that has blighted the creation since the time of the sin of Adam and Eve will be lifted as we read in Revelation 22:1-3, *“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him”* (NKJV). Can you imagine an earth without the curse that we live with on a daily basis? The removal of even one small part of it would be immense. All around us is evidence of the curse. What if there were no weeds? What if the wolf could dwell with the lamb and the calf could lie down with the lion and a little child could lead them? What if there was no more sickness or disease? The Scriptures declare, *“And there shall be no more curse ...”* Isaiah 11:9, *“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea”* (NKJV).

The tree of life, withheld in the Garden of Eden due to man’s sin, has been restored through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Jesus said to Thomas, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”* (John 14: 6, NKJV).

His Emphasis On Forgiving

Jesus provided for us the perfect example of a forgiving heart. We would do well to remember the words of Jesus at the time of His crucifixion. *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do”* (Luke 23:34, NKJV). We see the same intercessory prayer by Stephen for his executioners when he said, *“Lord do not charge them with this sin”* (Acts 7:60, NKJV). These words are written for us. Forgiveness is a spiritual principle and is something we cannot just choose to ignore. A number of years ago, I read an article written by Bro. Harvey Zingle titled *“Forgiveness: Difficult but Necessary.”* In it he says that forgiveness is the very essence (fundamental nature) of God. He goes on to say that if we want to enter into a place of complete surrender, as Jesus did and as Stephen did, we must become a forgiving people. It is a condition, not of the mind, but of the heart.

Unforgiveness is an affliction that cuts across all levels of society. It is a weakness of the flesh that affects old and young, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, Christian and non-Christian. It knows no boundaries and leaves in its path heartache, resentment and destruction. It causes division between husbands and wives, parents and children, extended families, employers and employees and even among members of the body of Christ. The ruination caused by unforgiveness is of a magnitude far beyond what we can even imagine. The root cause of most fractured relationships is likely an unwillingness to forgive. Forgiveness is a condition of the heart. God addresses the problem of the human heart in Ezekiel 36:26 when he says, *“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh”* (NKJV). The new creature has a new heart; a regenerated heart; a heart of forgiveness. Where once there was a heart of stone (unforgiveness), there is now a heart of flesh (forgiveness).

There are many scriptures that speak about forgiveness. Let us look at some of them:

“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ has forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32, NKJV). *“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness and humility, meekness, longsuffering, bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you must do (Forgive as freely as the Lord has forgiven you – Phillips). But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection (love is the golden chain of all the virtues – Phillips). And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful”* (Colossians 3:12-15, NKJV). The Phillips translation says, *“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, remembering that as members of the one body you are called to live in harmony, and never forget to be thankful for what God has done for you.”*

Jesus speaking, *“For if you forgive men their trespasses (sins) your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses (sins), neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (sins)”* (Matthew 6:14-15, NKJV).

Jesus speaking, *“Forgive and you will be forgiven”* (Luke 6:37).

The natural realm teaches us that growth is step by step, just like rungs on a ladder, one step at a time. A child goes through many growth stages and each one is important to his/her development. No stages are skipped in this developmental process and it is similar for every child: from rolling over, to sitting up, to crawling, to eventually walking. The parents look for certain skills to occur and they enhance those developments and rejoice in seeing normality in their child.

Similarly, our heavenly Father looks for and encourages us in our spiritual growth, and in so doing, He brings things into our lives that are designed precisely for the kind of growth necessary. But we cannot miss steps in our spiritual development any more than in our natural growth. Our maturity depends upon paying attention to what God says is important. It does not matter what society says nor does it matter what the majority believes. All that matters is what God has said and what He has made available to us. Jesus said, *“You must be born again.”* You are born again (from above) by asking the Lord to forgive your sin and by accepting Him into your heart. 1 John 1:9, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (NKJV). This is the beginning of the transformation experience. He has many experiences that are all designed for our maturity, but note that it begins with forgiveness, whereby we are reconciled to God.

His Desire That We Might Be Ministers Of Reconciliation

Reconciliation means *“a change of relationship from enmity to peace.”* 2 Corinthians 5:17, *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God (All this is God’s doing – Phillips), who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ (Christ’s representatives), as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God”* (NKJV).

Salvation changes the entire relationship of man to God and God to man. The hostile relationship has changed to one of friendship. Where once there was alienation, there is now closeness and communion. It is through the shed blood of Christ that we can be reconciled to God.

“For there is one God, and one mediator (reconciler) between God and man, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5, KJV). Paul expresses the depth and power of being reconciled to God in Colossians 1:19-21, “For it pleased the Father that in Him (Christ) all the fullness should dwell, and by Him, to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and blameless, and above reproach in His sight” (NKJV). This now becomes a beautiful peaceful, harmonious and enduring relationship with God, the Creator and His Son Jesus Christ.

His Instruction To Walk In Unity

It is one thing to “talk the talk” and quite another to “walk the walk.” Unity is not something you muster up. It is not a state of the mind, but rather a condition of the heart. It is a spiritual principle, the lack of which causes division both in the natural and in the spiritual. The enemy works laboriously to divide God’s people for he knows that a divided people are no threat to him and his kingdom. He also knows that a united people will

gradually and progressively come to the place of maturity where his kingdom will fall and the kingdom of God will be established in all the earth. *“And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force” (Matthew 11:12, NKJV). I am convinced that determination and perseverance are attributes that the members of the body of Christ must possess. We are in a battle. “Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:10-12, NKJV).*

Paul speaks of how essential unity is in the body of Christ in Ephesians 4:1-6, *“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (NKJV). †*



Grudges! What an ugly word. Grudges can sap the happiness and unity out of our lives, and relationships. Grudges are like an ever-present dark cloud, holding our emotions and happiness hostage.

It has been said that “When you hold a grudge, you want someone else’s sorrow to reflect your level of hurt, but the two rarely meet.”

The word “grudge” can be used both as a noun and a verb:

1. Noun: a persistent feeling of ill will or resentment resulting from a past insult or injury.
2. Verb: to be resentfully unwilling to give, grant, or allow something.

“Holding a grudge” should not be part of the Christian experience, and yet it is. It is for one reason. We still struggle from the effects of sin. However, we are offered the opportunity to live beyond the dictates of our sinful nature by the use of a powerful force: a force that should be empowered by the Holy Spirit; a force that is within our reach. That “force” is the “power of choice.”

You see, we “choose” to be offended. We choose to allow the effects of offences to grow, shadowing and overpowering all that we do. We can also “choose” to let offences and grudges go!

There is an experiment that you can do in your own home that displays

the effects of holding on to grudges, offences, and unforgiveness. Take a cup or glass of water. Now, hold the glass straight out, with your arm fully extended. Hold it for 10 seconds and try and estimate the weight of the glass with water.

Many will estimate the weight to be between 6 to 8 ounces. Now, continue holding in that same position for 5 minutes and estimate the weight. Many will now estimate the weight to be 12 or 16 ounces. Now, don’t drop your arm yet; hold it for another 20 minutes! Almost no one can hold it that long! Your muscles begin producing lactic acid and need relief; and the longer you hold out that same glass, the more unbearable the weight becomes.

You see, the longer you held the glass of water, the heavier it became! The longer we hold onto grudges, offences, and unforgiveness, the heavier the load becomes. What started in our demonstration as a few ounces of water, in time became unbearable. The only change was the amount of time it was held.

The longer we hold onto grudges, offences, and unforgiveness, the heavier they become.

There are many, many scriptures on forgiveness and unity, and I will list a few of these at the end of this article; but first, I would like to address some simple steps in eliminating grudges, offences, and unforgiveness.

The Apostle Paul provided a simple message regarding disagreements. He was finishing his fantastic epistle entitled “Philippians.” In his wonderful, historical, and glorious closing, Paul throws in a simple statement without explanation of the details. I have never heard a message that used this scripture as its core, and yet here it is. It is pregnant with significance.

“I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord” (Philippians 4:2 ESV).

Euodia and Syntyche were two women in the local church. Paul never identifies what the disagreement was about. The specific disagreement issue was not important to Paul. He did not side with either one. One was not right, while the other was wrong. In essence, the Apostle Paul, a man called and ordained by God, simply commands “GET OVER IT!” Simply “agree” in the Lord.

That’s it! The power of choice. Get over it! Forgive and move on. Don’t hold a grudge. Agree in the Lord. Don’t choose to allow the power of unforgiveness, offences, and grudges to hold your thoughts hostage. Just do it!

To be wronged is nothing, unless you choose to remember it.

I find that of the many scriptures on unity, there is one passage that really helps with my weaknesses. Jesus taught us to respect one another. We are to receive and respect one another, by recognizing the “Christ” and ministry in one another. We should not be so much “respecting” one another as a human being, but we “respect” the presence of Christ in one another.

“Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward” (Matthew 10:40-41 ESV).

This reminds me of the old humorous poem that goes something like this:

“To dwell above with the saints we love, now that will be Glory!
But to dwell below with the saints we know, now that’s another story!”

However, by respecting and loving the presence of Christ in one another, we can truly love and forgive one another.

Someone said that “holding a grudge” is like drinking rat poison, and then waiting for the rat to die! Grudges only hurt one person, our self.

I encourage all of our readers who struggle with these issues of holding grudges, or being offended, or harbouring unforgiveness. Choose to get over it! Now!

Here are a few scripture references on unity.

“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4: 1-6 ESV).

“Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2: 2-4 ESV).

“Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honourable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (Romans 12: 16-18).

“Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Colossians 3:13 NIV). †

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