

# THE INVISIBLE BARRIER

It is the desire of every preacher to preach the ultimate sermon; that sermon that makes the right adjustment in the heart of the hearer which allows one to walk in the Spirit 24 hours a day, everyday. Unfortunately that will not happen in this life. However, if you can hear with your spiritual ears this meditation – it will change your life.

Let's begin with three questions:

1. Is it possible to share, sing and testify of the victory that is in Christ Jesus and not be experiencing it ourselves?
2. Is it possible there is some kind of an invisible barrier that surrounds us so that when we watch others share the victory that is in Christ Jesus we stand outside of ourselves?
3. This is a delicate question. Is it possible that our Heavenly Father sometimes withholds joy, celebration and personal release from His children?

In Matthew 6:14 – 15 it says, *“If you forgive others their trespasses then your Heavenly Father will forgive yours but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, then the Father will not forgive yours.”*

May I add that the original Greek is the same as you've just heard me quote!

This passage is directed to all who stand in need of forgiveness, and not just to those who request it. It is very clear, if you need forgiveness, then you must give it. If you withhold forgiveness, then God withholds it from you.

Listen to Matthew 18:21-35.

*Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven." "Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. The servant fell on his knees before him. "Be patient with me", he begged, "and I will pay back everything." The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. "Pay back what you owe me," he demanded. His fellow servant fell on his knees and begged him, "be patient with me, and I will pay you back." But he refused. Instead he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. Then the master called the servant in. "You wicked servant", he said. "I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?" In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured until he could pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."*

Let me share with you a few highlights:

1. Peter thought that extending forgiveness 7 times would be the maximum amount because 7 was the perfect number. Jesus, however, responds with  $70 \times 7 = 490$  times. This isn't a legalistic answer. Rather, it is a dramatic reply to

illustrate the necessity to continue to forgive no matter how often it is required.

2. The king represents Christ. He issues compassion, release and forgiveness. The slave owed a debt he could have never repaid for he owed the equivalency of \$10 million dollars.
3. The slave did not extend the same forgiveness he freely received. When he found a fellow slave who only owed him the equivalency of \$18.00 he demanded full and immediate payment.
4. In verse 35 Jesus makes it very clear that our Heavenly Father responds to unforgiveness by withholding forgiveness to us for our debts.

While everyone else is growing and maturing in God some have decided to live in an impenetrable bubble rather than forgive. We have all seen or know some of these folks. I believe there are people here tonight in this very room who are living within an invisible barrier. Some stand in need of emotional healing and others need physical healing. Still others have been living the Christian life without any joy and peace. You need forgiveness and you need to release forgiveness to others.

What is forgiveness? In Luke 17:3 – 4 we find:

*“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.”*

We are commanded not to ignore sin nor should we minimize it but we are to reprimand our “brother” – one whom we have a close relationship with. In other words when someone sins against us we should not say, “Oh, that’s okay!” We should acknowledge that we were wronged, hurt or

sinned against. If the sinner repents we are also under obligation to grant him forgiveness immediately upon request.

This passage makes it very clear that repentance is to be followed by forgiveness. But what about the situation where the sinner does not express any sorrow, let alone repentance?

The Scripture addresses this as well. In Mark 11:25 we find:

*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 transgressions.”*

The sinner is not even mentioned in this passage. We do not know if they are repentant nor do we know if they have requested forgiveness. That is not the issue addressed. The passage clearly commands us to forgive anyone for any and all things.

We are to follow the example of Jesus on the cross. In the Gospel accounts we find that Jesus looked upon unrepentant sinners and said, “Father, forgive them...!” Jesus simply extended forgiveness. So must we.

Here are seven things forgiveness is and is not:

1. It is not an action but it is an attitude of the heart of God.
2. It is not an occasion but it is an established habit. It is not natural to the flesh but it is supernatural and therefore natural to the spirit.
3. It is not an apology but a sincere response to an apology.
4. It is a promise – “By God’s grace I will not hold that against you in the future. The debt has been paid in full, forever!”
5. It is not a “faith gift” but a response out of obedience. There is no such thing as a spiritual gift of forgiveness that falls upon us. You forgive out of obedience to God’s Word.

6. It is not a spiritual fruit of the Spirit. If you don't want to forgive someone then you must begin at that point to confess your heart condition and ask God to give you His desire to forgive. He will, then you must.
7. It is not a feeling. If you wait until you "feel" like it, you will probably never forgive. Forgiveness comes from God. It is a part of His character. It is not natural but it is supernatural. Do it and your feeling will eventually fall in line with your obedience.

In summary, I am suggesting to you that you cannot enjoy the fruits of Christ's salvation without ministering them to others. The word of God says, the forgiveness I give to you, give it to others.

Stop thinking about someone you wish were here to hear this. God has you here!

You have received a forgiveness heart. Keep it with you at all times. Please do not put your name on it; instead make some kind of mark on the front that you would recognize in the event you lose it. Inside on the heart, write the names of those people you need to forgive. All during the day tomorrow ask God to bring to your remembrance anyone He wants you to forgive.

Here are some possibilities:

- God – you may be holding something against Him,
- your spouse or your ex-spouse,
- your mother or father – your brothers or sisters,
- your own children or maybe your step-children,
- your neighbor, or maybe someone of another race,
- your supervisor, boss or manager,
- your co-workers,
- your business partner,

- a teacher, including Sunday school teachers,
- your doctor, lawyer or some other professional,
- your pastor (current or former), an elder, your denomination,
- most important – YOURSELF!

No one will see your heart. It's between you and Jesus. Be open and sincere, but obedient. Remember to make a mark on the front in case it is lost. We will do something with these tomorrow. Respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Let's pray...