

UNDERSTANDING THE LOVE OF GOD SERIES

LOVE AND FORGIVENESS

Mark 11: 25 after talking about the faith that moves mountains, in verse 25 Jesus said *“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive your trespasses.”*

We are talking about agape love. Agape love is a forgiving love. When we live in the world and when we live among the family of God where everyone is not perfect, we need plenty of love with forgiveness. The ability to forgive is godly. For human beings it is natural for them to hold grudges but for the new creature in Christ, the new creation of God, forgiveness should be something natural for us. We should be able to flow in forgiveness. Forgiveness not only relates in your relationships with your fellow man, forgiveness relates to your relationship with God. We have said that our horizontal relationship is an expression of our vertical relationship with God. In the same manner our horizontal disharmony will cause us to be in disharmony vertically with God. Having unforgiveness will bring disharmony with those around us. And Jesus makes it very clear when He talks about faith. If you do not have forgiveness it will paralyze your faith. Unforgiveness will render your faith inoperative. It's just like a car with a good engine with plenty of petrol and everything is set but if there is no oil in the car. We need the oil of love to lubricate our faith so that our faith can function the way God wants it to.

The bible tells us faith works by love. The word work is the word energize. Faith is energized by love. Jesus when He was talking about the faith that moves mountains did not finish in verse 24, He continues in verse 25 & 26. *Whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive Him.* Now He

did not talk about the other party. It is you that God is concerned with. Whenever you stand praying, if your relationship is not right with one another, you will not be able to reach God. Your prayers will never go above the ceiling. It will just reach the ceiling and bounce off. God will not hear your prayers. Unforgiveness is a blockage, which prevents our prayers from reaching out to God. It is like weights that are tied to our prayer. It is drawn down by gravity by sins and grudges and unforgiveness and imperfections. We need to be free of that. Our prayers cannot take flight to God. It is hindered whenever you stand praying. So whenever you have a relationship that is not in order, the bible tells you leave your gift on the altar, go and make right first before you come back to God. For those of you who live in the same family, husband, wife, brothers or sisters, you will realize that if ever you have a misunderstanding among your family and you all try to pray to God, you could even act and pray religiously, it will still not reach God because there is something empty about it. If you ever have a misunderstanding in your family, the first thing you have to do is to humble yourself and say sorry. When you have made your relationship right, you will see how beautiful it is then to pray. You don't have to change into a religious tone. All you have to do is just speak and the Father hears.

Jesus said, *whenever you stand praying if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.* Every time you have unforgiveness or you can't release forgiveness, even though it may not be your fault shows that there is sin and imperfection in your life. Please understand the word *sin*. The word *sin* is from the Greek word '*hamartia*'; the word '*hamartia*' means to fall short of God's glory, to miss the mark. The word *sin* merely means imperfection. So whenever you cannot release forgiveness it shows a flow of imperfection in your life. Even though it may not be your fault in that situation. Usually I would say in any situation like that both parties carry some faults. It is very seldom that is only one side. Usually, 99% of the time it's both sides that carry the blame. If you cannot release the unforgiveness and say, "I forgive that person, I release that person," what you are doing is sub-consciously you are holding an image of that person and you are holding a sort of vengeance against that person. You are going to react in a certain way. There is something in you that is showing a flaw. Our Lord Jesus Christ was so perfect, so beautiful a person that when He was on the cross, all these fellows who have sent Him for crucifixion, who had nailed Him, who were standing right there at that time mocking Him and saying, "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross," who laughed at Him but He said,

“Father forgive them.” That shows the perfection in His life. The ability to forgive shows the perfection in your life.

Meekness is not weakness. Don't misunderstand that when a person ask you for forgiveness or a person says I forgive you, that person is weak. In fact it takes a greater strength to do that. It is nothing to hold grudges and say I just don't care about that guy and holding unforgiveness and saying I am strong here. No, in the world you may think that that is strength. Be a man; be strong. The bible says, *“Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.”* The world tries to inherit and conquer by natural weapons and force but the meek, by their very meekness and they don't even have to lift one finger, it is given to them. To inherit is to possess something that you never worked for. That's the power of meekness. When you are meek and you are humble, God is the one who works for you. God is the one who does all the work. He sends His angels and all you have to do is just be a member of the body of Christ. All you have to do is be meek and the work gets done for you. Meekness is strength. So Jesus Christ says you must forgive.

And the next verse 26 says *“But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”* Look at it in verse 25 it says that if you have anything against another person, it's all in your heart. You may not have done anything that is sinful in God's sight, that is trespasses. But if you don't release forgiveness to others God cannot release His forgiveness to you.

Matthew 6 the Lord's Prayer, verse 12, *“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”* Forgive us as we forgive. Notice the principle again. That the amount of forgiveness we release to others is the same amount of forgiveness we receive from God. Forgiveness is linked to the attribute of mercy. Do you know that the attribute of mercy is what the worshippers always mention whenever they come to God? In II Chron. 5 they say, *“Bless the Lord for He is good and His mercy endures forever.”* If God does not exercise mercy, we are finished. It is because of the mercy of God that we are counted worthy to come into His presence and worship Him. Every time they worship God they say, *“Blessed be the Lord for He is good and His mercy endures forever.”* The word mercy has also been translated loving-kindness. King David said, *“Thy loving kindness is better than life.”* What does it mean? That life without living kindness, without mercy is not worth living. But when

there is mercy, when there is living kindness is worth living. It is better than life. Imagine living without God; imagine living without the acceptance from God. Living as aliens from God's love is a horrible life. That is why David understood that with the love of God how lovely it is. It's better than life. The mercy of God, if God could show us mercy and we are of the same nature of God, God requires that we show mercy to others. To forgive others is to show mercy onto others. So don't ever withhold our unforgiveness because if you do, you are stopping the mercy of God from operation in your life. You are stopping yourself and blocking yourself from growing in the mercy of God.

In the Lord's Prayer is mention in verse 12 of Matthew 6. Do you notice that Jesus emphasized it again as if it's such an important point that He doesn't want us to miss it? Matthew 6: 14 *"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."* Now the verse speaks about a conditional clause. For example, if I say to Bro. James, "If you bring a book, I will give you a bible." My giving him a bible is based upon him giving me a book. Or if I say, "If you bring your bible on Sunday I will bless you." Now the blessing becomes conditional. Praise God His blessing is unconditional because the condition has been met in Jesus. Remember every time there is unconditional blessings it is because somebody met the condition. Usually it's traced back to Jesus. Or if you tell your workers and say, "If you will work for an extra two days, I will see to it that you get recompensed." The recompense is conditioned by the first part. Jesus said, "If you forgive," that means our receiving forgiveness and mercy is conditioned upon our giving mercy. Look very carefully, it's the same principle as give and it shall be given unto you. Those who give mercy, what will they receive? Mercy. Those who bless others financially, what happens? They are blessed. It's the same principle and Jesus is saying, "If you don't give forth mercy, you cannot receive mercy." Mercy needs to be release.

I don't know why He puts the next verse in. The next verse speaks the opposite side. It says, *if you do not forgive, neither will your Father forgive you.* That's awesome. Just think if God doesn't forgive you. Now if you find it hard to forgive, think about God not forgiving you. Why is that so? Lets examine forgiveness. Love forgives because love is mercy. Now the Father in heaven wants to release His forgiveness to us but unless we give forgiveness to other, God's forgiveness cannot come in. Lets examine these aspects of unforgiveness and forgiveness. Forgiveness

actually is to withhold judgment. Unforgiveness is tied up to judgments and vengeance. So when we release forgiveness, it is releasing the right to judge. God is the Judge. The meek shall inherit the earth. Do you know why the meek inherit the earth? Because the meek says, I will commit my judgment to God and my righteousness shall prevail because God will see to it. It's just like a big bully who tries to come against you and instead of relying on your strength, you rely on God who will send His guardian angel. Isn't it better to do that instead of doing boxing with the big bully? You just exercise the love of God and the angel comes and takes care for you. See the meek releases the power of God. It withholds judgment. To forgive is to withhold judgment. That means when a person does something wrong, you are saying I am not going to judge that person. I withhold judgment not that the person need not be judged but God is the Judge. I am God's servant. He is the Judge. I am not the judge. He is the Judge. When we forgive we actually withdraw judgment on that person. You examine people who have unforgiveness; you know what they do? They say, "I am right. I am right." When you forgive, you are withdrawing judgment. You would say, "I will not judge. I leave and surrender my judgment to the Lord. "

Matthew 7: 1 *"Judge not, that you be not judged." For with the same measure, with what judgment you judge, you will be judged. And with the same measure you used it will be measured back to you.* Do you know it's very dangerous to judge another person? Let me clarify the difference between judging things and judging a person. Let look at I Cor.2, it does not mean that you walk in this life without exercising discernment or judgment of things. Do you know you have to practice judgment of things? For example, if you go to a bookstall and you buy a book. You make a decision and said you will buy this book and not that book. You are already practicing judgment. When you go to town to do some shopping and supposing you have ten things to choose and you look at it very carefully and you make a decision. Decision can only come after judgment. You have to have a certain priority to judge and make a decision. So you see ten brands of the item that you need and so you study all the brands and say I settle for this brand. You have made a judgment by choosing one and not the other nine. You have made a judgment. Whenever there are many seminars going on and you say, I will go to this and not to that. Do you know you have made a judgment?

Lets look at I Cor.2: 15 *"But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he*

himself is rightly judged by no one." Now how do I differentiate between these two verses between Matthew 7: 1 Jesus said don't judge and here Paul says in I Cor.2: 15 judge. This verse says judge. That verse says don't judge. You have to understand the content of both. I Cor. 2: 15 is in reference to your own life. You have to judge what is profitable for your life. Otherwise you will be sitting like a huge frog with the mouth open. Everything that comes you swallows. They come and throw the rubbish heap you also swallow. They preach nonsense and heresy you open your mouth and swallow. You will never grow. You will be destroyed. We have to practice judgment when it regards your own life. Otherwise you will have no framework of protection. You swallow everything that comes along and you are moved by every wave of doctrine. You won't be firmly founded on solid ground. When as regards to your life, what you believe and for your spiritual growth, you have to make a judgment. When some of you came and join the fellowship in this church, you believed that you could grow better. And if you have been from some other fellowship, you make a decision and you choose. Your decision has to be regarding your own life. You have to make some decisions otherwise people will roughshod over you. That is why I disagree with the doctrine of total helpless zombie submission. The church leadership is not your decision maker. We are not going to answer in the judgment day for you. You are not going to stand before Jesus and say I didn't make any decision. They made the decision for me. You have to make your own decision as far as your spiritual life is concerned. And it comes to your life, your time, your possession; you have to make a decision. You cannot let another person to control you.

In Phil.1: 9 *"And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment."* That word discernment is the same word judgment in the Greek. That your love may grow. Do you know love grows in judgment? For example, if I were to invite speakers to our church, I have to make judgments based on their performance, based also on the Holy Spirit's direction that I hear. We cannot invite just anybody. We have to make sure that they are sound in doctrine. We have to make decisions. So according to the realm of your life that you are living you have to make decisions. We need to practice judgment in spiritual things. You have to decide a good book from a bad book, a good speaker from a bad speaker. You have to decide sometimes between career and the ministry of God you have to decide. Perhaps where you are going to serve in. You have to practice judgment to make those decisions. So we can judge around that circumference of our life.

When it goes outside the circle of our life and it has to do with another person's life, we have to withhold judgment because it has nothing to do with your life anymore. For example, what is the profit of you holding unforgiveness against Brother X? It has nothing to do with your life anymore. You must withhold, draw back your judgment because it has nothing to do with your life. When you practice this kind of love you will understand that you can disagree without being disagreeable. You can disagree in doctrine without having fights. I don't agree fully with every minister who joins the fellowship of charismatic ministers. Some of them preach non-essential doctrine or apply methods that I don't fully agree with but I don't have to exclude them from love and fellowship. I can still love them; after all I am not their judge. God is their Judge. It's nothing to do with my life. But whenever it comes into area of my life, then I make a decision. I am not receiving this kind of doctrine or method. See I can make a decision within the borders of my life or circumference. But when it is outside, I should have nothing to do with it. The only thing I can give them is my love. The bible says in Romans 14, owe no man anything except love. I am obligated; I am in debt to love. You owe the world love, that's what Paul is saying, owe nothing except love. Why do we owe people love? It is because we received love. So we need to give them. The world needs the love. That is different from judging someone. Jesus is actually saying in Matthew 7: 1 don't judge the person. And Paul is saying in I Cor.2: 15 judge the things that are said, the things that are spoken, the doctrine. I can judge some of you and say lets consider some bible doctrine and if you outline some bible doctrine, I may disagree with you. I may judge your faith, I may judge your belief. I may point out with the Word and say this is not in line with the Word and this is close to heresy. But I don't judge the person. I only keep it within the framework of the doctrine. That means doctrine is one thing but you as a person I love you.

Jesus had the skill of loving sinners without loving sin. You and I know He hates sin. Hebrew says that thou have hated iniquity. He hates sins but He loves sinners. I despise wrong doctrine but I love people whatever doctrine they hold. So we must learn to love people because the love of people is what God has. God loves each one as a person. Remember the background of love that we have taught? If you could see the potential in a person, then you can love them. Here is where we see the difference between judging a person and judging the things. We have to learn to withhold. When you have unforgiveness, you link the things and the person together. You link the action of the person to the person. Most of the

time you write them off as a has-been. That is not good. Unforgiveness links the person to the action. When we were sinners, God separates our person from our action. He didn't like our actions but He loves us as a person. At the same time you also must separate the words of a person from a person although they both are related. Yet in essence deep in the heart of man you can find something to love them for. Separate the action of a person from the person. For example, if somebody hurts me, I could say that cruel person. What am I saying? I interpret the person's action to be what that person is. Do you know that many times one action of a person or two actions of a person may not be the full conclusion of the real person inside because what you may be seeing is the person's reaction due to the hurts in his or her own life. That is not who they really are. That is not what they really can be. So Jesus said, "Don't judge."

Paul tells us in Romans 14: 4 *"Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand. Look at verse 10 "But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."* Paul who wrote I Cor. 2: 15 is now saying don't judge. Did you know the problems of the Romans? He says you have to separate the religious practice of a person from the person. If they want to eat vegetables it's okay. Separate the action of a person from the person. Paul added there, he said they could make their own decision and eat both meat and vegetables. It's all right. Paul himself is doing that because he says he has more knowledge. But when it is outside your life, why hold it against them? Learn to keep your practices and belief within your circumferences and don't impose your belief and practices on others. That is an important key. That is true love functioning. You see love does not impose. I fellowship with many Christians I have never asked them to join our church. Sometimes they call for help, if we have time to help, we would help. What are we doing? We cannot impose. You see, love respect the free choice of a person, that is why if somebody wants to choose to be a blessing to another church, we also bless him or her and send him or her off. That is love, it respects the free will, does not impose. It is not love if you chain up your wife, take a whip and say you do everything I say. Love is to release the free will and letting the person have the free will. See when it's outside your circumference, you have no right to take the circumference of your religiosity and impose it on another person.

You will notice that I pray in tongues many hours a day and I don't compel you to pray. I will just speak about the benefit of prayer until the saliva from your mouth is dropping and say teach me to do it too. Until you want it. You don't enjoy food if I take a gun and point it at your head and say enjoy your food. Eat it now. You won't enjoy it as much as even if I compel you to eat it. But if I just keep cooking it and let all the aroma flow into the atmosphere around you until your saliva is dropping and you say, "Give the food to me." That's more enjoyable because you allowed a person freedom to choose. Remember God has given us the lovely free will. We should be able to give that to others too. Never impose nor compel. Love does not impose or compel. Love withholds judgment of the person. But if you ever judge, it has to do with things concerning your personal life. It's a skill to learn that. When you learn that you will be able to learn and practice forgiveness. I forgive a person for the way they act. But I still can accept them as they are because I separate their personality from their action.

In conclusion we look at Matt.18: 15-18 *"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*

Now that ties with relationship. Something happens when you hold unforgiveness against another person. You know there have been wives who have been praying for their husbands for many years but they have unforgiveness in their heart. And I always see this beautiful picture many times. When the wife realizes it and releases forgiveness, suddenly God answered their prayer. Why, all those ten years they have been praying and they have been hitting the ceiling. What Jesus said, when you pray, you forgive, for if you don't God won't hear you. It's as if you didn't pray. The moment you release forgiveness it is released in heaven. What you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. What you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. You may be praying for your parents to be saved, but in your heart you have unforgiveness and usually it also shows in your actions. You may pray until Jesus comes back and you may never get your answer because it will be as if you never prayed. Or those parents praying for their children, your

children may have done something that has hurt you.

I counseled one mother from another church. She had been praying for the child who is in his twenties. The child is rebellious. He doesn't want to follow the way of the Lord. I said have you release forgiveness. Your child had hurt you many ways and you are holding things against him. On one side they are praying and on the other they are hurt. Many times there are a lot of heartaches and tears but when the mother or the father holds unforgiveness, you may cry until you fill the whole bucket with your tears, it will be as if you have never prayed and never cried. But the day you release forgiveness, that's when the miracle can happen.

I was counseling that mother, "Why don't you release love, release forgiveness? I know you are much older but you can still come to the child and say, 'forgive me and I forgive you.' Take that child in your arm and say, 'I love you.'" As long as you hold unforgiveness it will never go beyond the sound of your voice. It's as if you never prayed. Now you know why Jesus showed how important it is. You see it's a principle that God had created. Heaven is filled with God's love and mercy. So any prayer that is not born out of mercy cannot enter Him. There is no sin in heaven, there is no sickness in heaven because in the presence of God there is no sin, and there is no sickness. There is only love and mercy. So if you are having unforgiveness and your prayers are filled with unforgiveness, your words will be filled with that. How can it enter the holy presence of God? When you begin to pray with the mercy of God, it is light attracts light, before it even leaves your mouth, while its still in your mouth -zoom - heaven hears.