

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (16).

December 30, 2007.

Introduction.

Our study today will be the final one on forgiveness. I know I have raised questions in your minds and left some issues untouched. I want to ask you to keep your notes and we will take a couple Sunday School sessions to answer questions and discuss related matters.

God is our Heavenly Father. We are the members of God's family. We are the sons and daughters of God. Our Heavenly Father wants us to be "diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" in His family. He wants us to be humble and in that humility treat one another with gentleness and patience. And He wants all of these things to be done in His family in an atmosphere of real, abounding, discerning love. (*Eph.4:2-3*). In *Col.3:14* Paul wrote, "Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity." In *Phil.1:9* Paul's prayer is that "your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment."

One of the important pathways to achieving these goals is forgiveness, forgiving one another just as God in Christ has forgiven us. (cf. *Eph.4:32*). The failure to forgive one another creates a breach between us and our Heavenly Father and between us and the brother or sister whom we are refusing to forgive. Our Heavenly Father will not tolerate the presence of such breaches in His family. And He will take disciplinary and scourging action to make you aware of His intolerance of such breaches.

In our last study we looked **firstly** at *Matt.6:9, 12, 14, 15*. These verses are found in what is popularly known as "**the Lord's prayer.**" In *vs.9* Jesus said, "Pray, then in this way; Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name." One of the

ways in which we hallow God's name is found in *vs.12*, "And forgive us our debts (sins), as we also have forgiven our debtors", (that is, those who have sinned against us.).

To be forgiven by our Heavenly Father and to forgive others are very important matters in God's household. The importance is seen in the fact that of all the points in the prayer, Jesus selected *vs.12* for further comment. In *vs.14-15* Jesus said, "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions."

Secondly, we looked at *Matt.18:15*. Jesus said, "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother." In addition we looked at *Lk.17:3*, "If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him"; and *Gal.6:1*, "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness." We looked also at *Lev.19:17-18* & *Prov.27:5-6* which were very instructive to us in this matter of rebuking a brother who has sinned.

Matthew 18 : 21 – 35.

Brethren, we have much ground to cover today. So I will not extend the review of our last study. Please turn to *Matt.18:21-35*. (**read**). To remind you, the context of the passage we are dealing with is not the Divine judicial forgiveness in Christ that results in salvation. We saw that Divine judicial forgiveness is once-for-all, unrepeatable and irreversible. The context of the forgiveness we are dealing with Divine Fatherly forgiveness. This forgiveness is a part of our ongoing sanctification in Christ and we will need it again and again and again. The conditions for this Fatherly forgiveness is confession, repentance and being ready, willing and prepared to forgive others who sin against us.

In *Matt.18:21-35* Jesus told a parable with exaggerated details that can be misused and misapplied quite easily. But before we come to the parable, let us see what prompted the parable. Peter has learned from what Jesus said in *vss.15-20* that it is important to forgive. But as far as Peter knew, there has to be a limit to the practice of forgiveness. The rabbis taught the people that the limit was three times in one day. Peter decided to ask Jesus what was the limit. In framing the question Peter decided to be very generous with the limit. So he asked Jesus, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Note carefully that the context of Peter’s question is “my brother”. And the context of Jesus’ application is “My heavenly Father”. (*vs.35*). We are obviously dealing here with matters that relate to conduct in the family of God.

Jesus’ answer must have jolted Peter and the other disciples. Jesus said, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.” In this matter of forgiving a brother or sister who sins against us, Jesus did away with all limits and calculations. Jesus is saying that in this matter of forgiving a brother or sister, there is no place for keeping score. This reminds us of what Paul said about love in *1Cor.13:5*, “[Love] does not take into account a wrong suffered.” In other words, love does not keep scores.

When Jesus said “seventy times seven” He alluded to Lamech’s expression of unlimited vindictiveness in *Gen.4:24*. After committing murder, Lamech declared, “If Cain is avenged sevenfold, then Lamech seventy-sevenfold.” Jesus’ clear point is that the Christian must not manifest any form of vindictiveness in his dealings with his brothers and sisters in Christ. What he must manifest is gracious unlimited forgiveness.

Jesus then proceeded to tell the parable of the unforgiving servant. This servant owed his master ten thousand talents. In Jesus’ day a talent was the highest unit of currency. It was equal to **6,000** denarii. One denarius was a day’s wage for a laborer. A laborer will have to work **16½** years to earn one talent. Ten thousand was the highest Greek number. Ten thousand talents were 60 million denarii. In terms of our money, this servant owed

his master over seven billion T.T. dollars. He obviously couldn't repay this. Yet he pleaded with his master for patience with the promise to repay everything. The master's response was one of compassion. He graciously released the slave and forgave him the debt.

In the next scene of the parable we meet a fellow slave who owed the forgiven slave **100** denarii. In terms of our money that amounts to twelve thousand T.T. dollars. This forgiven slave grabbed his fellow slave by the throat and choking him, he demanded repayment. His fellow slave pleaded for patience. But the forgiven slave was unwilling to be patient. Instead of forgiving his fellow slave, he had him arrested and thrown into prison. It is of interest to note that the expression "**fellow slave**" is used four times in the parable. These slaves belonged to the same master and the same household.

The other fellow slaves in the house saw what happened and went and told their master. This angered the master who summoned the forgiven slave, rebuked him for being unmerciful and unforgiving and he withdrew the forgiveness he gave. The master said to him, "You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?" (*vss.32-33*). Here is the point : our Heavenly Father will withhold or withdraw His forgiveness when we fail to forgive others as expressed in the prayer, "forgive us our sins, as we also have forgiven those who have sinned against us." (cf. *Matt.6:12*). The "torturers" in *vs.34* are the debt collectors who put pressure on you to pay your debts. They are the men who will break an arm or a leg to remind you of the importance of paying your debt.

The key point made in *vss.32-33* is repeated in *Eph.4:32* and *Col.3:12-14* with one difference. The slave was forgiven because he pleaded with his master. He pleaded for mercy and he got mercy and more than mercy. He also got grace. His master said, "I forgave you all your debt", seven billion dollars worth. But he could not forgive his fellow slave a debt of twelve thousand dollars. This slave's sin is comparable to David's

sins of adultery and murder. The fellow slave's sin is comparable to stealing a bunch of unripe bananas.

Please turn to *Eph.4:32*. Paul wrote, "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." Now turn to *Col.3:12-14*. (read). The emphasis in this passage is "forgiving each other ... just as the Lord [Jesus) forgave you, so also should you." What did you deserve when God the Judge forgave you? You deserved the penalty of death, the second death in the lake of fire. You deserved eternal punishment in the eternal fires of hell. But God was kind to you, incomprehensibly kind. He was also tender-hearted or compassionate. **Peter O'Brien** wrote, "*Compassion is regularly used in the New Testament of God or Christ to speak of their unbounded mercy to sinners.*"

Now here is the difference in *Eph.4:32* and *Col.3:12-14* : in these two passages your responsibility to forgive your brother or sister in Christ is rooted in the Divine judicial forgiveness you received when God saved you. The Bible presents us with two reasons for forgiving your brother or sister in Christ who has sinned against you : (1) Divine judicial forgiveness in Christ unto salvation; (2) Divine Fatherly forgiveness in Christ unto sanctification.

The verbs "**forgiving; has forgiven; and forgave**", as used in Ephesians and Colossians, emphasize the gracious nature of this forgiveness. "**Forgiving**" is present tense and tells us that this forgiveness is to be unceasing, even unwearying. (**O'Brien**). It reminds us of *Matt.18:22* in which Jesus removed all limits in forgiving our brothers and sisters in Christ.

"Just as also" has both a comparative and causal force. God's forgiveness of us is our reason and model for forgiving one another. At the same time I should add that there is no other reason or model. God's forgiveness of us, whether judicial or Fatherly, falls in the realm of the incomparably greater. Our forgiveness of one another falls in the realm of the lesser, in the realm of the insignificant.

In forgiving one another we must be kind and tender-hearted or compassionate just as our Heavenly Father. In *Col.3:12* Paul said we must put on “a heart of compassion”. “**A heart of compassion**” is literally “*bowels of compassion*”. It describes compassion that is deeply felt. “**Gentleness**” is the quality that enables your criticism or rebuke of a sinning brother to be received as help and not as condemnation. Forgiveness also requires “**patience**”. The patient Christian endures wrongs without seeking for or exacting revenge.

In forgiving one another, we must “be imitators of God, as beloved children.” (*Eph.5:1*). O’Brien wrote, “*The [Ephesian Christians] are urged to imitate their heavenly Father by showing the same generous forgiveness to others as He has shown to them. The designation of them as “dearly beloved children” is not simply a comparison between father and children, but signifies the basis on which this demand to be imitators is made. They have been adopted into God’s family and are His beloved children. His love has now been poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom.5:5). Since they have richly experienced that love, they should be imitators and reproduce the family likeness.*”

Andrew Lincoln wrote, “*It would be incongruous to be God’s dearly loved child and not want to become like one’s loving Father. In fact, the new child-Father relationship not only requires but also enables imitation to take place, as the children live their lives out of the love they have already experienced from their Father.*”

In *vs.35* Jesus said, “My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.” “**Each of you**” means no Christian is exempted from the demands to forgive as being taught by Jesus. “**From your heart**” excludes all bargaining and all legalism when it comes to forgiving a brother or sister in Christ. There is no room here for : I will forgive him when he agrees to so and so. I will forgive him when he does so and so. I will forgive him if he promises so and so.

God's divine grace in forgiving His children is immeasurable. There are no limits to God's generosity in forgiving His undeserving children. For this reason God's children cannot claim the right to withhold forgiveness from their brothers and sisters in Christ. Our forgiving one another, by comparison, is insignificant to our Heavenly Father forgiving us. Our sins against our Heavenly Father are ten thousand talent sins. Our sins against one another are **100** denarii sins. In other words, we sin far more often and more seriously against God in thoughts, words and deeds than we sin against one another. David's sins of adultery and murder were made against Uriah and they were also sins against God. But Nathan added that David's sins against God were far more serious. By his sins David also despised the word of the Lord, despised the Lord and gave occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. (*2Sam.12:9-14*).

Jesus' point in this parable is the same point He made in *Matt.6:14-15* : forgiveness is conditional. One of the conditions is your willingness to forgive your brother or sister who sins against you.

Jesus intended, by this parable to astonish and amaze you with the master's generosity and the slaves appalling conduct. In the same way Jesus wants us to be astonished and amazed by our Heavenly Father's generosity in forgiving us and our own appalling conduct in refusing to forgive a fellow Christian. To what can we compare the torturers? I believe we can compare the torturers to God putting pressure on an unforgiving Christian through discipline and scourging. **Jay Adams** noted that the parable shows us the unreasonableness in being unforgiving; the meanness in being unforgiving; and the danger in being unforgiving.

Here are the questions as we close this point : do you see yourself in the unforgiving slave? Are you running to God day after day for mercy and grace but withholding such mercy and grace from your brother and sister in Christ, from your spouse, and from your children?

Luke 17 : 3 – 10.

Please turn now to *Lk.17:3-10*. (**read**). The verb “**rebuke**” calls for a frank rebuke done with gentleness and politeness. The verb does not guarantee that your rebuke will bring about the result of conviction and repentance. So Jesus added, “if he repents, forgive him.” Then Jesus added something that totally shocked the disciples. He said if this brother “sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, “I repent”, forgive him.”

There is no indication in the verse that this brother is committing the same sin over and over. So we will not speculate. If the brother sins and come to you “saying, “I repent”,” you are to forgive him. Some may ask, “*But what if this brother is not genuine in his repentance?*” The verb “**saying**” does not allow you to question the sincerity or insincerity of his repentance with a view to withholding forgiveness. You are not allowed to withhold forgiveness. On the other hand you may surmise that something is wrong and the brother needs some kind of help. If you do, then *Gal.6:1* says you should seek to offer this help. But what if he rejects your help? Then you should seek to follow the pattern outlined in *Matt.18:15-20*.

Jesus’ point here is that there must be no limits to our ability and willingness to forgive the brother or sister who sins against us. The disciples realized the practical challenge this would pose to them and they cried out under the weight of Jesus’ commands, “Increase our faith!”. Jesus answered the disciples’ request with two illustrations. Before we look at the illustrations, I want us to note a few lessons in *vss.3-4*. These are drawn from **Darrell Bock’s** commentary.

Bock noted that two fundamental relational commitments are expressed in the exhortations to rebuke and forgive. *Firstly*, disciples are to share in each other’s commitment to pursue righteousness. The pursuit of righteousness is both individual matter and a community or family matter. The latter makes us accountable to one another for the way we live. It is for this reason that Jesus exhorted us to rebuke a

brother who sins. Jesus' focus is not on our meddling in the affairs of others. Jesus' focus is on the maintenance of righteousness both individually and in the household of God. You cannot separate the individual believer from the household of God.

Secondly, we are not allowed to pursue our spirituality in isolation from one another. For Jesus, faith is not merely a private matter. Our growth in faith is something we pursue individually and together as a community of God. Your growth in righteousness positively impacts the members of God's household. Your sins negatively impacts the members of God's household. The community of believers is a family and the best interests of each member is a concern of each other member. (cf. *Phil.2:4*). Thus, the call to rebuke is the exercise of a familial responsibility. As we shall see in our next series of studies, an isolationist faith is not an option. An isolationist faith has spiritual death written all over it.

This brings us to Jesus' two illustrations. The first is found in *vs.6*. (**read**). The mustard seed was popularly known as the smallest seed in Palestine. The mulberry tree was most likely the black mulberry tree that had a vast root system and lived up to **600** years. There are several important points to note here :

- 1). Faith is not a matter of quantity but of presence.
- 2). The smallest amount of faith can accomplish a great deal. Uprooting a replanting a tree in the sea pictures for us faith's ability to accomplish incredible things.
- 3). The way to increase faith is simply to have it and to act on what you have.
- 4). The tree's readiness to obey must be noted. The verb "**obey**" portrays the tree's readiness to obey even before the command was given. Faith demands of us that we must be ready to obey every command given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ.

The second illustration is found in *vss.7-10*. The point here is that obeying the Lord and forgiving your brother who sins has nothing to do with small faith or great faith. Forgiving your brother who sins has nothing to do with praying for the needed faith or for

an increase in faith to do so. Forgiving your brother who sins is at the very basic level a duty that must be carried out. Why must you forgive your brother who has sinned against you? Because the Lord commanded you to do so. Because your Heavenly Father commanded you to do so. Should you expect the Lord to praise you for obeying Him? No! The application in *vs.10* is very clear : “So you too, when you have done all the things which are commanded you, say, “We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done”.” In reality, the cry, “**Lord, increase our faith**”, is a cop-out and a smokescreen for an unwillingness to obey the Lord and forgive your brother or sister in Christ.

Now in closing, I want to make several brief points.

Firstly, *Matt.18:15* says, “If your brother sins...” *Lk.17:3* says, “If your brother sins...” The point here is that in the providence of God you happen to become aware that your brother has sinned. God brought this knowledge to you and by doing so God made you responsible to deal with your brother. You do not have an option here. The Lord did not tell you to weigh the consequences and then decide whether it would be good, wise or safe to rebuke your brother. The godly, wise, good and safe thing to do is to rebuke your brother.

The point I want to make now is this : these two verses do not give you the warrant to become some kind of watchdog Christian. You are called to deal with known sinful actions. The sin may have been committed against you or in front of you. This is what makes the brother and his sin your responsibility. I want to add here that so-called watchdog Christians become judgmental and destructively critical. Watchdog Christians always know what is wrong but they never know what is right. They know how to rebuke but they do not know how to restore. They know how to wound but they do not know how to heal. I want you to beware of this danger of becoming a watchdog Christian.

Secondly, you cannot forgive someone who does not seek your forgiveness by their confession of their sins and repentance. The Bible does not teach unilateral forgiveness. This means you cannot forgive dead people regardless of what evil deed they committed against you when they were alive. And you cannot forgive someone who refuses to acknowledge his / her sin, confess and repent.

Of course, when you make such a point people quickly run to Jesus and Stephen. In *Lk.23:34* we read that as they were crucifying Jesus, He said, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” Did Jesus unilaterally forgive the wicked Jews and Romans here? The answer is “no”. Jesus was praying that His Father would forgive them. The first answer to Jesus’ prayer was the Day of Pentecost when Peter preached. Peter charged the people with murdering the Lord Jesus Christ. (*Acts 2:23*). Convicted by Peter’s preaching, the people repented of their sins and received forgiveness from God. (*vss.37-42*).

The same is true of Stephen in *Acts 7:60*. Stephen said, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!” Stephen did not forgive those who were murdering him. Stephen was praying that the Lord would forgive them. One of the answers to Stephen’s prayer was the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. (*Acts 9:1-19*).

Thirdly, as Christians we must be ready and willing in our hearts to forgive those who repent of their sins. *Psa.86:5* says, “For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You.” “**Ready to forgive**” is the translation of a Hebrew adjective that describes what God is like. He is ready and willing to forgive all those who repent of their sins and put their trust in the Lord Jesus to save them. He is ready and willing to forgive His children who confess and repent of their sins. We must imitate our Heavenly Father and be ready and willing to forgive those who have sinned against us and who repent of their sins.

There are those who may quote *Mark 11:25* at this point. Jesus said to His disciples, “Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so

that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions.” Is Jesus calling upon us, in contradiction to the rest of the Scriptures, to unilaterally forgive those who have sinned against us? The verb **“forgive”** is a command in the present tense. What does that tell us? **Hiebert** said the verb *“assert the standing duty of a forgiving attitude.”* **Hiebert** added that the reason you must have a forgiving attitude is that you want your Heavenly Father to forgive you your transgressions. This Divine Fatherly forgiveness of our sins must motivate our willingness to forgive others.

Hendriksen wrote, *“The person who prays must be willing and anxious to forgive. If he lacks this disposition he has no right to assume that his own trespasses have been forgiven.”* The important question we need to answer is : do I have a heart that is ready to forgive? There are no *“what ifs”* here. It is either you have a heart that is ready to forgive or you do not have a heart that is ready to forgive.

Fourthly, the person who is unwilling to forgive has the desire for personal vengeance. The unforgiving person is ready and willing to take vengeance into his / her own hands. In **Gen.50**, after the death of Jacob, Joseph’s brothers became very afraid. They knew Joseph was in a position to take revenge, if he so desired. (**vs.15**). And so they pleaded before Joseph, “Please forgive ... the transgression of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong.” (**vs.17**). Here is a classic example of confession and asking for forgiveness. Joseph had no desire for revenge. He saw the taking of revenge as usurping God’s place and actions. He asked his brothers, “am I in God’s place?” (**vs.19**). Joseph was ready and willing to forgive his brothers. But he could not forgive them until they asked. (cf. **vs.21**).

The apostle warned in **Rom.12:19**, “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay”, says the Lord.” In **Deut.32:35** the Lord said, “Vengeance in Mine, and retribution.”

Fifthly, forgiveness is a three-fold promise. In forgiveness, sins are buried. Sins are removed as far as the east is from the west. The three-fold promise is as follows :

- i). Forgiveness is a promise not to remember a sin and thus not bring it up again to the person whom you have forgiven.
- ii). Forgiveness is a promise not to remember a sin and thus not to bring it up again with others. That is gossip. It is akin to exhuming a dead body and creating an unholy stink.
- iii). Forgiveness is a promise not to remember a sin and thus not to bring it up again to yourself. To do so puts you in danger of reviving anger and hurt which in turn can lead to brooding, bitterness and depression.

Sixthly, forgiveness changes the golden rule which says, **“do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”** Forgiveness says, **“do unto others as God has done unto you.”** In other words, forgiveness is grounded in God’s forgiving us in Christ. Here is a golden rule that so many Christians are unwilling to obey and the result is conflicts and divisions in the family of God. Even when forgiveness is supposedly granted, we do not keep the three-fold promise. A country singer sang, *“We bury the hatchet, but leave the handle sticking out.”* Sadly, those who are unwilling to forgive are breaking the bridge over which they must pass again and again.

Brethren, the celebration of the Lord’s Supper is a celebration of God’s forgiveness of us in Christ, a forgiveness that did not ignore His holy justice. Each time you partake of the Lord’s Supper, you are saying that God, in His kindness and tender-heartedness, has forgiven you in Christ as the Divine Judge and continues to forgive you in Christ as your Heavenly Father. Each time you partake you should reaffirm : **“I will do unto others as God has done unto me.”**

Seventhly, Jesus said, “If he repents, forgive him”. (*Lk.17:3.*) **“If he repents”** is not the same as making an apology or saying **“I am sorry”**. **“I am sorry”** and **“I apologize”** are not Biblical concepts, especially as they are used today. More than often they are cop-outs for taking full Biblical responsibility for your sins and for dealing with

your sins as God requires that you deal with them. Confession demands that you agree that you have sinned. Confession demands that you specifically identify and name your sin. Repentance is the expression of sincere sorrow for your sin but it also demands that you turn away from your sin and seek help to do so if such help is needed. **“I am sorry”** and **“I apologize”** do not necessarily accomplish these Biblical goals.

Sin brings hurt and pain. Sin disrupts relationships. **“I am sorry”** and **“I apologize”** do not deal with and work out the issues of Biblical reconciliation. Far too often we seem to think that **“I am sorry”** and **“I apologize”** are the magical balms that soothe and / or heals the pains our sins caused and repair the rupture our relationships suffered. When these things do not happen we can become frustrated and ask the familiar questions we all know so well : *What more do you want from me? Didn't I apologize? Why can't you let go and move on?* Brethren it is compulsory that we begin to think carefully and Biblically about these matters and put into practice that which God requires of us lest we find ourselves being isolated and / or having skin-deep relationships.

Dealing with sin and the results of sin as God requires of us can be very stressful. The prime example of the experience of stress in dealing with sin is our Lord. **Matt.26:37** says that as He prepared to face the cross **“He began to be grieved and distressed.”** **Mk.14:33** says He **“began to be very distressed and troubled.”** Luke tells us that the stress was such **“His sweat became like drops of blood”**. (**Lk.22:44**). You say, *“I feel like I can't take that stress.”* Jesus felt the same way and He began to pray, **“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.”** (**Matt.26:39**).

We all want the easy path to let bygones be bygones and move on. I have heard people dismiss the results of sin by saying, *“that's water under the bridge”*. We all wish we could hide behind **1Pet.4:8** which says, **“love covers a multitude of sins.”** The truth is, love does cover a multitude of sins. But it is also true that there are some sins that throw off the cover of love. These sins cause hurt and pain. These sins break fellowship and lead to an unreconciled condition. These sins cannot be overlooked. These sins must be dealt with. Who determines what sin or sins throw off the cover of love? The simple

answer is the person against whom the sin was committed. Now it may be that this person is thin-skinned and far too easily offended. And that may have to be dealt with. But until that is dealt with, if you sin against this person and your relationship with this person has been negatively impacted, you will need to deal with that sin and repair your relationship with this person.

I want you to keep in mind also that while love may cover a multitude of your sins in your dealings with others, they are still sins, sin you have committed against your Heavenly Father. *1Pet.4:8* can easily become a licentious cover for unbecoming behavior that commits a lot of small sins that others are ignoring but that your Heavenly Father is not ignoring because He is seeing your heart. So beware, lest you find yourself under your Heavenly Father's discipline and / or scourging and then you wonder what is happening.

Your goal in this life is not how much sin you can get away with. Your goal in this life is not how close you can get to the edge and get away with it. Your goal in this life is your final glorification and being conformed to the image of Christ. And the path to that goal is what Peter set before us : "what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness." (*2Pet.3:11*). Your goal in this life is a positive God-glorifying Christianity that positively impacts and builds up your Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

God requires that we deal with the sins we have committed. God requires that we deal with the results of our sins. God requires that we bring healing where there is pain. God requires that we bring reconciliation where relationships have been ruptured. When we fail to do so, that is a compounding of our sins.

You must keep in mind that sin has a rippling effect. You must keep in mind that when you sin against someone, you have also sinned against God. Your sin ruptures your Father / son or Father / daughter relationship with your Heavenly Father. The classic example is David sinning against Uriah the Hittite. When David sinned against Uriah, he

also sinned against God. He ruptured his relationship with God. *Psa.51* is David's cry to God to forgive and restore him.

You may be thinking at this point, "*my goodness, sin is real trouble.*" And you will be right. Sin is real trouble. This is why John wrote to you, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin." (*1Jn.2:1*). You can't dismiss your sins with "*I apologize*" and "*let bygones be bygones*" and "*let us move on*".

It may be as you are listening to me that the Holy Spirit is bringing to your mind sins, hurts and ruptured relationships that you need to revisit and deal with in a Biblical manner. I want to press upon you to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and do what He wants you to do. Let this final Sunday in **2007** be a day of healing for your soul. Let this be a day of freeing your soul from sin's guilt. Let this be a day of reconciliation and repairing breaches. Let this be the day that the Lord restores to you the joy of His salvation. (*Psa.51:12*). Let this be a day of personal revival for you.

