

Faith and Forgiveness are Tied Together

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Freedom only happens when we practice three kinds of forgiveness.

Forgiveness received.

King David knew mistakes. He knew about disappointing others and God. But he knew with confidence that forgiveness was at his disposal. All he had to do was ask and receive it. King David wrote in Psalm 86:5-7, "For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you. Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer; listen to my plea for grace. In the day of my trouble, I call upon you, for you answer me." God doesn't deal out forgiveness begrudgingly. God offers it freely for His children. But we need to ask with a repentant heart and then receive it with gratitude.

Forgiveness given.

Paul wrote in Colossians 3:13, "Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive." Forgiveness is hard, but it is possible. We, as forgiven people, have the duty and privilege of extending God's mercy and grace to others.

This forgiveness, however, does not make us a doormat or permit others to hurt us. But what it does is allow us to forgive continually (Matthew 18:21-22) while trusting God. God is the ultimate judge who will make all things right. Our forgiveness is evidence that we trust God's sovereignty and goodness.

Forgiveness practiced.

Two people could have been trapped by their pasts: Peter and Paul. Peter denied Jesus three times. But Jesus forgave Peter and commissioned Him (and others) to build the church. Peter could have taken himself out and said, "no way." Instead, he practiced forgiveness and forgave himself.

Paul was a persecutor of the church. He hated Jesus and His followers. People died through the authority of Paul. But later, Paul would write, "But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13b-14). He could have been chained to his past sins. Instead, he practiced forgiveness and forgave himself.

There is freedom in forgiveness. We don't need to live in bondage to guilt. We don't need to be chained down by the hurt from others. We don't need to live in our past. We are forgiven. Therefore, we are free. So, begin to receive, give, and practice forgiveness. When we do this, we will win the day.