

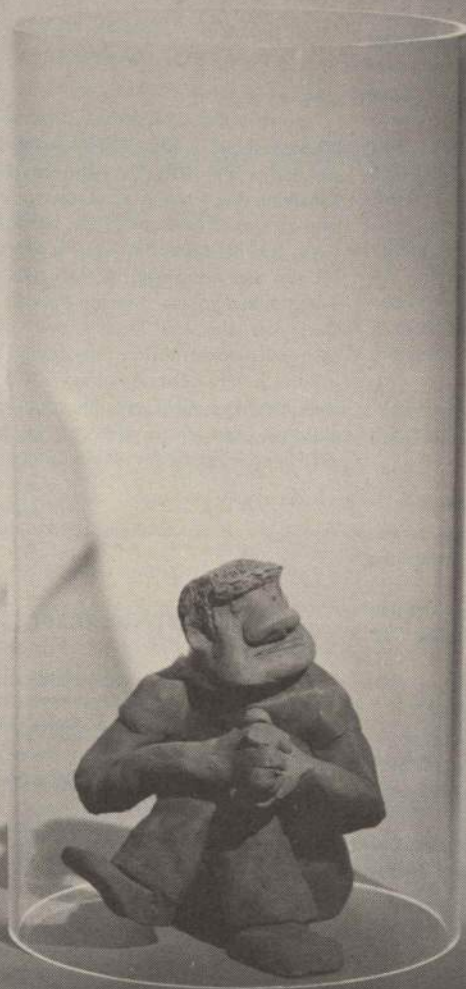


new

wine

OCTOBER 1976

THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE  
DEDICATED TO CHRISTIAN GROWTH



## Unforgiveness: The Invisible Barrier

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It has become increasingly apparent that many of the traditional churches have changed their views on such subjects as discipleship and local church. I praise God for this change but have become concerned with the depth of the change. The brethren at *New Wine* have offered some solid scriptural teaching on the subjects to aid in these changes.

However, it should be stressed that there needs to be a certain amount of responsibility and commitment. It is one thing to accept doctrine, but it is quite another to assimilate it into one's life. The use of the terms discipleship and lordship are often simplified and misunderstood. How can we fit a new life-giving doctrine into the structure of an old stagnant body? The only way is with major changes in the lives of the persons involved. It takes commitment to both the Lord and to the brethren. The church cannot fool itself by thinking it has arrived when in reality it has only just begun. The reading of a few books or having listened to the latest tapes does not prepare us as being mature in these areas. We need the confirmation and the revelation of the Holy Spirit in our daily experience. We cannot cut corners while learning what the Lord desires us to become. We need to learn to die and to only resurrect that which the Lord sees fit for the body.

Leif Leaf  
Chico, CA

Please don't let anything undermine the new wine no matter what the old wineskins say!

Ron Woodworth  
Tempe, AZ

#### CHANGE AFTER CHANGE AFTER . . .

Your issue on "Change" was very timely. I felt it was a direct word from the Lord for NOW!

Mrs. Darla Schwartz  
Russellville, AR

Your June magazine came with just what I needed. First, when reading "Letters to the Editor" one sentence struck me — "Be willing to give up our right to be right." I said, "Oh, Lord, that's it; that's what you have been trying to get me to understand!"

Then I turned the page and began to read "Change After Change After . . ." by Bob Mumford. I didn't get very far until I began to realize how faithful God is to "pour" me into other vessels, for only when He gets through pouring will I be fit for His use.

Ethel M. Deloe  
Alturas, CA

# Letters to Editor

The articles, "Spiritual Progress" and "Repentance" [June 1976] helped me to see and yield little by little to His plans. Legalism was ripping a wonderful relationship to shreds with strain and tension. While I was too interested in judging the speck in his eye and not accepting this person as he was, I failed to see that my striving to play God was the log in my own eye. The spiritual reconstruction now taking place in my life is very concrete proof of God's love: that He does love enough to correct His children and show them a better way, desiring only good for all concerned.

Gale Mallette  
Jackson, MS

#### I WANTA BE FREE!

Please stop sending us your magazine. The content has become somewhat predictable, since you have one theme which you rework and present in each issue. It seems that you are constantly stepping deeper into legalism and bondage.

Lesly & Janet Derksen  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

A lot of different ideas and attitudes have been brought forth concerning your magazine. Through God's grace, *New Wine* has helped us to more fully understand the freedom found in God's Word. Freedom in being able to give of ourselves and receive from other members of the Body; freedom in financial priorities; and freedom in receiving God's grace and maintaining a clean conscience before Him.

Ron & Judy Bowlin  
Albuquerque, NM

Your issue on "Cleaning Up Our Finances" [May 1976] has been a great blessing. South African Christians really need this! Like the prodigal son, they are on a mad spending spree.

Things in South Africa are not looking good or promising. On our borders the Communists are building up pressure and with the rioting and unrest on the inside, the climate for trouble and demon activity has never been better. And what is so shaking is that Christians are so unconcerned!

One brother had a vision (long before the Mozambique and Angola situation) of red waves rolling from the east and the west towards South Africa. When he was praying about this, right in the heart of South Africa, a "man" was raised to full stature and, with uplifted hands, the red waves were driven back. We believe that this is the Body of Christ, maturing, coming to full stature.

Jannie Van Zyl  
Johannesburg, South Africa

#### NO PHOTOSTATS PLEASE!

We do appreciate the spiritual content of your magazine, and value your concern for the direction and welfare of the Lord's Body. Whilst we need not necessarily agree with everything published — many feel that what God directs in one area should not be a "photostat" reproduction in another — there is growth and maturity to be experienced wherever God's people meet.

I. C. Carlisle  
Whangarei, New Zealand

#### A FINAL WORD

Thank you for not being anti-Catholic, or anti any other denomination for that matter. You promote unity instead of disunity. Praise the Lord!

C. J. Van Wyk  
Kensington, MD

In some instances when even counseling reaches a dead-end, your words break through.

Kerry Morgensen  
Santa Cruz, CA

Your teachings have been my "seeing-eye dog" in the formation of much of my Christian life.

Dean Daniels  
Goldenvalley, MN



# Editorial

While it is true that the Christian life at its best requires an attitude of complete dependence on God, it is remarkable how often our experiencing His grace depends on some right decision or action on our part.

Isaiah reminds us, "Therefore *will the Lord wait*, that He may be gracious unto you . . ." (Isa. 30:18). His waiting for us to do the right thing is especially true in the matter of giving and receiving forgiveness.

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Matt. 6:14-15).

While most of us are readily aware that gross sins such as lying, stealing and immorality can shut us off from the grace of God, not so many seem aware that unforgiveness can be just as great a barrier. Indeed, many Christians feel it is not only permissible but almost necessary to harbor certain "justifiable" grudges and resentments.

Years ago I saw a photograph of a sad-faced raccoon which had been captured with his paw stuck inside a milk bottle. Had he been willing to let go of the crab apple inside the bottle, he could have extracted his paw and gone free. But as long as he gripped the crab apple, the milk bottle held him prisoner.

More than a few Christians are like that, holding on to past hurts and grievances as tightly as that raccoon clung to his crab apple. But to be spiritually free (i.e. to experience the full forgiveness and grace of God) requires the release of every crab apple of bitterness and resentment. Otherwise a part of us remains bottled up in unforgiveness. We hope the emphasis on forgiveness in this issue of *New Wine* will help you see that.



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EDITOR: Don Basham; MANAGING EDITOR: Dick Leggatt; EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS: Janet Baum, Sandra Houillet; PRODUCTION MANAGER: John Zeppa; DESIGN: Larry Rice

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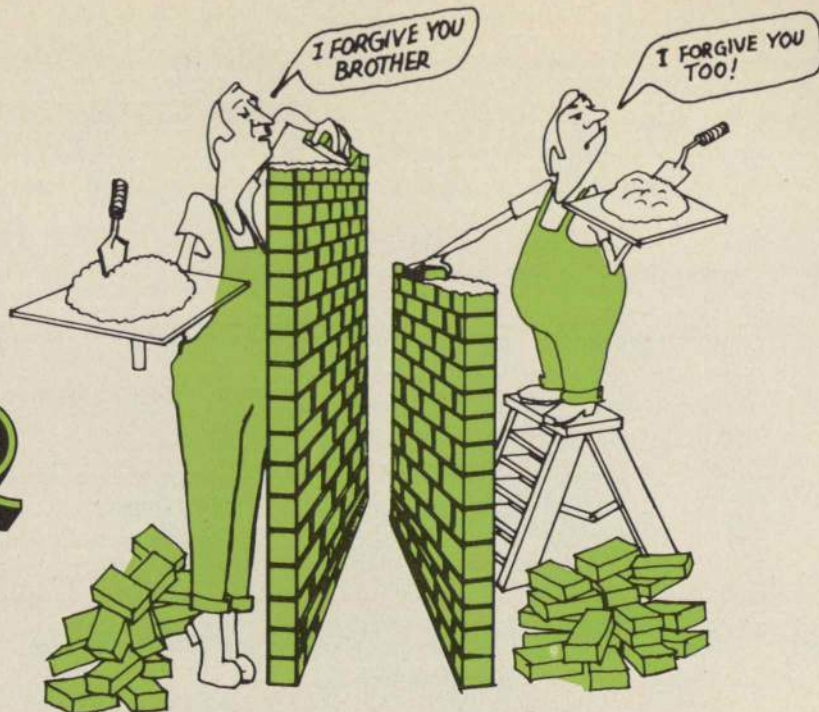
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# THE BARRIER Of

Unforgiveness is a luxury  
no Christian can afford.



# UNFORGIVENESS

by  
Derek Prince

Many Christians have barriers in their lives which keep them from experiencing fulfillment, satisfaction, peace, healing, and the multiplied blessings of God, and in this article we want to examine one very common barrier. But before we do this I want to remind you that from Calvary onward, if any barriers arise between God and man, they are on man's side, not on God's. At the death and resurrection of Jesus, all the barriers went down on God's side. So if there is any kind of spiritual barrier blocking your spiritual progress — something that's holding you back; frustrating you; pinning you down; keeping you from the joy, the peace, the satisfaction, the fulfillment that you ought to have and you long to have — then the barrier is on your side, and not on God's.

In my personal experience, the greatest single barrier to full peace and perfect rest is *unforgiveness*. Let's begin our study by looking at the words of Jesus in Matthew 18:15–35.

(15) Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

(16) But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two

more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

(17) And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.

(18) Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

(19) Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

(20) For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

(21) Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

(22) Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

(23) Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

(24) And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

(25) But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded

him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

(26) The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

(27) Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

(28) But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

(29) And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

(30) And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

(31) So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told their lord all that was done.

(32) Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

(33) Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?

(34) And his lord was wroth, and



delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

(35) So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

In verses 18–19 of this passage we have what I call the “powerhouse” of the Church — the place of all power and all authority. Jesus says, “Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven . . . if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.” I believe that this is the cell of the Church: two or three believers led together by the Spirit into the name of Jesus. The meeting point is the name of Jesus and the one who brings them together is the Holy Spirit. This is the cell life of which the Church is composed.

In physical life it is a principle that if the cell life is broken down, the body becomes unhealthy. And I believe that the same is true of the Body of Jesus Christ, the Church. If the local cell life is broken down, the whole Body cannot be healthy.

In this cell life is the germ of all Church life and the heart and source of all power. No one needs more power than is promised there: “If two of you shall agree on earth touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them.” What more do we need than that! All power is contained in the application of that verse.

But what I want to point out is that this promise of power is ringed around and guarded with a fence, and you cannot get in unless you meet the conditions. I call the fence “right relationship.” No one belongs inside the fence who is not living in right relationship with God and man. In verses 15–17, just before Jesus gives this promise, He speaks about what to do if your brother offends you. And just after the promise, in verses 23–35, Jesus goes on to give the parable of the unforgiving servant, warning us of the terrible conse-

quences if we fail to forgive another believer. We see from the placement of these verses that the secret place of power is ringed about with “right relationships.”

### A SPIRITUAL SYMPHONY

In verse 19 of Matthew 18 we read, “. . . if two of you shall agree.” The Greek word here is precisely the same word that gives us the English word “symphony.” It is not mere intellectual agreement; it is harmony, concord. It is two people being in one spirit together. In the natural, if you are to have a symphony there are two things that you must have. You must have a *score*, and you must have a *conductor*. In the spiritual realm, if you are to have symphony you must have the same two things. The score is the will of God; the conductor is the Holy Spirit. When two people come together in one spirit (in symphony, in harmony) agreeing on the will of God as revealed by the Holy Spirit, then anything they need is accessible. This is a real place. It’s a real promise, but you have to meet the conditions.

**If we would look at the inner condition of the Body of Christ today, we’d be shocked at what we saw!**

I’ve heard so many people say, “Come on, Brother Prince. Let’s agree, we’ll pray for so and so.” Sometimes I’m embarrassed because many times I feel it’s a shallow pretense which won’t produce the results. Agreement is not just saying, “We’ll agree.” Agreement is being in harmony in the Spirit with another, and as we come to this place of real spiritual harmony, we are irresistible. Because of this, the devil will do everything in his power to keep Christians from coming into this place, and he has largely succeeded with multitudes of professing Christians.

I trust that I will not shock you by saying that the Church, which is the Body of Christ, is *not* an earthly insti-

tution. But generally speaking, Christians have felt obliged or impelled to produce some kind of institutional organization in which to tie themselves together to achieve unity. Yet the truth of the matter is, this does not produce the unity which God intends for the Body of Jesus Christ.

Under the Old Testament, God had a tremendous problem with his people Israel. He had revealed Himself as One who could not be adequately represented by any kind of portrait, picture or image. The attempt to make any image of God was strictly forbidden. But we find again and again that Israel fell into the error of making an image or an idol and saying, “This represents God.”

I believe a corresponding mistake is made by Christians in this dispensation. The Body of Jesus Christ cannot be represented institutionally. It cannot be represented as an organization of the kind that we’re familiar with in secular life. But time and again, Christians try to make something visible and tangible out of that which is spiritual. They try to produce an organization, a union, a tying together which will replace the proper unity and relationship of the Body of Jesus Christ, and invariably there is failure.

Take for example the Salvation Army (and this is no criticism of the Salvation Army). Within the Salvation Army there is strong organizational unity which is similar to that of an army. And there is a further tying together through uniforms so that you look at people and you say immediately, “Well, she’s a Salvation Army lass,” or “He’s an officer in the Salvation Army.” All that man can do to produce unity and organizational structure is there, and yet, two people may be in the Salvation Army and be at absolute loggerheads with each other — so far from being in real union and harmony that they may be in total opposition. Two people may be in the Salvation Army and one may be converted and regenerated and the other may be unregenerated. They aren’t even in the same spiritual sphere!



Or take for example the Anglican Church of Britain in which I was brought up. You could be a member of the Anglican Church and be a Communist, or you can be, in effect, a Roman Catholic. Within that organization, bound together by organizational structure, there are diametrically different ideas, totally opposed to one another, in absolute disharmony, with no union whatever in the spiritual life between them. It's an outward substitute for the inward thing. Now the great danger that I see is that we accept the outward as a substitute for the inward, and then we neglect the inward. The result is that today there are multitudes of Christians within the Body in wrong relationship to other people and they are not even aware that anything is wrong.

One night in a service, five people came forward for healing. I was led to ask each person individually, "Is there any unforgiveness or resentment in your heart against anybody?" Out of the five, three people said, "Yes, there is."

I replied, "Well, do you really want me to pray for you? I can go through the motions, but what kind of effect do you think that prayer is going to have?" And do you know what they said? "We'd better go away and put things right and then come back." Remarkable! But what was really remarkable was that those people were not conscious of the wrong relationship. Why were they deceived? Because they had allowed some external substitute to blind them to the inner reality. If we would look at the inner condition of the Body of Christ today, we'd be shocked at what we saw!

### JOINTS AND BANDS

If the outward union has nothing to do with the inward spiritual relationship within the Body of Christ, what is it that keeps the Body together? What is the true nature and source of our unity? We find the answer to this very important question in two passages from Ephesians and Colossians.

In Ephesians 4:16 Paul speaks about

Christ as the head of the Body: "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every *joint* supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

**If you do not forgive others, God does not forgive you.**

In Colossians 2:19 in a similar context, Paul speaks about Christ the head "from which the whole body by *joints* and *bands* having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God."

There are two things that Paul says unite the members of the Body: *joints* and *bands*. Just as joints and bands in the physical body keep the members together, so they also unite the members of the spiritual Body of Christ. What are the joints and bands? I would suggest to you very practically speaking, that the *joints* are the relationships between the members of the Body, and the *bands* are the attitudes that prevail amongst them.

Now in the natural, my arm has three bones. Though each one is strong and healthy, their effective functioning depends on a joint which we call the elbow. Each of these bones could be in itself perfectly healthy, and yet the arm could be very ineffective if the joint wasn't functioning properly. And this is true of the Body of Christ. More than your individual stability is required to make you effective. Your relationship to others is the joint that fits you into the Body. And unless your relationship with other people is right, you cannot be an effective member of the Body.

Again in Ephesians and Colossians Paul speaks about the great bands which unite the whole Body. In Ephesians 4:3 he says, "... the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The words *bond* and *band* are the same. And Colossians 3:14 says, "... put on charity (love), which is

the bond of perfectness," which keeps the complete Body together. The most essential bond that can keep the Body of Christ together in true unity is *love*. The other bond is *peace*.

We are all kept together as a whole by what I choose to call the "attitude of peace and love." But when this attitude is nonexistent, the whole functioning of the Body is totally broken down. Where we stand in wrong relationship to our fellow Christians, the Body cannot function, nor can we receive what we need ourselves. Not only do we shut out others from the blessing but we are shut out ourselves. And yet my experience in various situations and among so many groups has been that more than half the people in any professing church congregation have wrong attitudes and relationships to other people, and quite commonly these wrong relationships are with other members of their congregation.

One time, after preaching in a certain Pentecostal church where God really moved, I went to another Pentecostal church and preached the same messages. But at this second church, nothing happened. I thought, "What's wrong?"

Do you know what I discovered? Here was a church with about 400 people in regular attendance on Sunday, and yet that church was divided right down the middle. The people on my right hand hadn't spoken to the people on my left hand for five years. When they approached one another in the street they crossed the road in order to avoid speaking. Consequently, for me to preach to those people was a waste of breath and time, since there was no possibility of the Holy Spirit moving in that church. Ironically, I have found in so many similar circumstances that the people in such a congregation are ready to blame their pastor or hire another evangelist or do anything except the one thing they must do, which is to get right with one another.

### THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT

Turning now to verses 23-35 of



Matthew 18, we find the parable of the unforgiving servant. The last verse of the chapter plainly indicates to us that Jesus is referring to professing Christians. The first servant in the parable owed ten thousand talents or, in up-to-date proportions, about \$6,000,000. Because he was unable to pay, he was about to be cast into prison. He besought the mercy of his lord, who freely forgave him the whole debt. But as he walked out, he found a fellowservant who owed him in the same proportion, about \$10.00.

"Pay me," he demanded of the servant.

"I can't," the man replied.

"Well, I'm going to put you in prison."

"Wait, I'll pay. I'll get the \$10.00. I'll pay!"

"No," he said, "If you can't pay, to prison you go."

Of course, the other servants were terribly shocked, and they went and reported to their lord. "You know the servant whom you forgave \$6,000,000? He went right out from your office, met a fellowservant who owed him \$10.00 which he couldn't pay and so he threw the man into prison."

**You can retain another in his sin, and many are doing it through unforgiveness.**

And the Bible says, "The lord of that servant was wroth," or very angry. And after calling for him and inquiring what had happened, he said, "Thou wicked servant." Then he gave the command, "Deliver him to the tormentors, until he has paid all that is due." And the last verse says, "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespass."

Let me point out to you two plain facts: First of all, *the failure to forgive others is wickedness*. The Lord said,

"Thou wicked servant." Unforgiveness is not merely sin: it is *wickedness*. Secondly, the unforgiving servant was delivered to the tormentors. And the Lord says, "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you." Christian, if you do not, from your heart, forgive your brothers their trespasses — any harm, injury or debt — the Lord Jesus said God will treat you as that lord treated the unforgiving servant, delivering you to the tormentors.

I arrived at an understanding of this passage, because in the course of my particular ministry I've found multitudes of professing Christians in the hands of the tormentors — spiritual torment, mental torment, physical torment. And I've thought to myself, "God, how can this be? People who call upon the name of Jesus; people who profess salvation; people who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, and yet they're in the hands of the tormentor. They're in the hands of evil spirits; they don't have peace; they don't have joy; they're subject to fear; their minds are not at rest; and they come to me for deliverance. Now if it were outside the Church, I could understand it, but it's *in* the Church."

And the Lord told me, "They're in the hands of the tormentors because I delivered them to the tormentors." If God has put anybody in the hands of the tormentors, there is not a creature on earth that can get them out. Not one. A lot of preachers are trying, and a lot more people are getting the preachers to try, but it will not happen. If God has delivered you to the tormentors, you will stay there until you meet God's conditions for getting out. You may get temporary relief, but that's all. You cannot have true peace, deliverance or liberation until you have freely forgiven everybody against whom you've ever held resentment or unforgiveness. This is God's unvarying condition. There's no way around it.

### PRAYER AND FORGIVENESS

The Lord's Prayer is a pattern for all

believing Christians. Jesus says to His disciples when they asked Him how to pray, "After this manner therefore pray ye." I understand this to mean that this is a pattern — not that we are necessarily to use the same words, but that the principles are invariable.

Jesus tells us to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." Now you cannot change that. You are entitled to ask forgiveness from God in the same proportion that you forgive others, but not more. If you do not forgive others, God does not forgive you.

This is the only portion of the Lord's Prayer that Jesus felt it necessary to comment upon — "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:14–15). I want to say it as clearly and as emphatically as I can: If there is anybody whom you have not forgiven, do not deceive yourself, you are not forgiven by God. That is the source of all your problems. You do not have full forgiveness.

In Mark 11:23–25, Jesus speaks some tremendous words: "For verily, I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but believe that these things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he says." Again, there is no power greater than that. It's all the power we need. Additionally, in the next verse, He says, "Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." You say, "Wonderful!"

But wait a minute. Verse 25–26 says, "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." This is absolutely clear. If ye have ought against any, forgive. Now "ought



against any" leaves nothing and no one out.

**The one who resents suffers more than the one who is resented.**

If you have "ought against any," I don't think you are ready for heaven. I say, "think," because I don't have the last word on that subject, but I cannot understand how anyone could go to heaven whose sins are not forgiven. And it is very clear that if you have not forgiven others, you are not forgiven yourself.

I want you to notice in Ephesians 1:7 that redemption is coextensive with forgiveness. "In whom (Christ) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins . . ." In other words, if all your sins are forgiven, you have the total rights of redemption; but if there is any area of unforgiven sin, then you do not have the total rights of redemption. And if you have the total rights of redemption, then the devil has no power over you and no place in you. However, if there is any area in you where redemption's rights do not apply, the devil knows. He knows that if there is unforgiven sin in your life, he has a legal claim over you and you cannot get him out. You can shout at him; you can jump at him; you can get the preacher to pray, but if he has a legal right to be there, nothing will get him out. Therefore you cannot have deliverance until you have freely forgiven "ought against any."

What is the last petition in the Lord's Prayer? It's a petition for deliverance. "Deliver us from the evil one." That is the correct translation. But you have no right to pray that prayer until you have prayed, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." Once the forgiveness question is settled, then deliverance is no problem. So remember, if you are not in a forgiving spirit and attitude towards every

person, the devil has a legal claim over your life.

### BEING A "SIN-REMITTER"

John 20:22-23 says, "And when he had said this, he [Jesus] breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." It is a tremendous responsibility to become a sin-remitter and a sin-retainer.

First of all let me say emphatically, I find no suggestion that these words of Jesus were confined to a particular select group. Nor do I find any suggestion that those who received this were given any sort of authority to transmit it to others. On the contrary, it seems clear that this prerogative must come as a result of a definite, direct, personal encounter with Jesus. You come face to face with Jesus in order for His Spirit to be inbreathed upon you. This applies as much to you as it applied to those apostles. And I believe the passage means just exactly what it says: "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted." So, one result of the Holy Spirit coming into your life is that you become a sin-remitter.

But here is the problem — God's children are retaining sin in the lives of other children of God, and the result is that the whole Church is bound up in an atmosphere of sin held against each other. You can retain another in his sin, and many are doing it through unforgiveness. Many a wife longs for the salvation of her husband, but through failure to forgive him, she is retaining him in his sin. She is the one who is keeping him bound. If you have unforgiveness in your heart against anybody, you are bound to them. They may be a thousand miles away, but you are still bound by an invisible cord. And the only way to sever your bondage to that person is through forgiveness.

Let me also add that unforgiveness is not changed by time. Though you may have had a resentment in your heart for forty or fifty years, you must still take the appropriate action. It is

not changed by the fact that it happened a long while ago.

### FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

It is a fact of life that potentially, and often experientially, our most dangerous, harmful, poisonous relationships are with the people with whom we are the closest. One particularly common relationship problem is that of young people and their parents. I would venture to say that the majority of young people in the United States are in some measure in opposition or rebellion against their parents, and in many cases, the parents have to acknowledge a major share of the blame. The problem is not juvenile delinquents; it's adult delinquents.

But nevertheless, I always tell young people, "If you have resentment, hatred, and rebellion in your heart against your parents, remember, it's not your parents who will suffer the most — it's *you*. The one who resents suffers more than the one who is resented. Furthermore, the Scripture says the first commandment with a promise is "Honor thy father and thy mother that it may be well with you." You will never have it "well" if you do not honor your father and mother. It cannot be. It's contrary to divine law.

The other area where this problem is most prevalent is the husband/wife relationship. Most women don't have a problem with the man who delivers the groceries, or the man who comes to measure the gas meter once a month, because he doesn't get in the way. But the person who shares your bed — that's the one! I don't know exactly how many husbands resent their wives and how many wives resent their husbands, but the proportion is amazingly large.

Let's come back to that statement, "If two of you should agree on earth." Who are the two most obvious people on earth to agree together? A husband and wife. And how many of them *do* agree? I wouldn't like to answer that! Many women are busy in church activities just because they can't agree with their husbands. They run to the church, not because they want to serve the Lord, but because they want an



escape from their own problems at home.

I remember praying once with a young married woman for deliverance. After she had received a wonderful deliverance she said, "Oh, Brother Prince, now I think I'm going to be a missionary, or at least a Sunday School teacher!"

I said to her, "Sister, listen to me a moment. The most important ministry is to be the best wife you can be to your husband and the best mother you can be to your children. Everything else is secondary to that. Get things in the right order."

Many sisters come to me and say, "Brother Prince, I have the baptism in the Holy Spirit, but my husband doesn't believe in it." And I usually reply, "Have you shown your husband anything that will make him believe in it? Have you become a better wife as a result of the baptism? Has your home become a sweeter place? Is there a more loving atmosphere? Do you show more care and consideration for your husband than you ever showed before? If not, don't ask him to believe in the baptism, because he won't." If all the baptism does is make you go running off to meetings, leaving your husband alone, you are likely to be saddled for the rest of your life with a partner who doesn't believe what you believe.

Did you know that the last word in the Old Testament is a curse? The last word of the Prophet Malachi says, "Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse!" And do you know the cause of the curse? It is explained in the verses just before this last phrase: "I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." The Holy Spirit certainly foresaw conditions at the end of this age. And He put His finger unerringly on the number one problem in the United States today — *the home!* Broken homes with wives and husbands who can't agree, going their own ways and neglecting their children.

Do you know why God chose Abraham? Genesis 18:17-19 says:

And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do;

Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

There's the secret. The Lord chose Abraham because He could trust him to be in such a relationship with his family as to command his children and his household to keep the way of the Lord.

The converse is equally true. Any nation where husbands and fathers fail to fulfil their obligations to their family cannot remain a great and mighty nation. That is true of the United States. If home life is not changed in this nation, there is no hope for it. It is finished. The writing is on the wall. And I maintain that Spirit-filled people with the full-gospel message should have an answer to this problem. And if we don't have an answer, then where is the world to look for an answer?

... you do not  
have to *feel* forgiveness; you  
have to *will* forgiveness.

It is tragic indeed that there are multitudes of so-called Spirit-filled homes in which there is no harmony between husband and wife. If I understand anything, it is that the people who are anointed by the Holy Ghost have a message for their age. I do not believe we need to sit back with folded hands and say, "The situation is out of control; there's nothing that can be done." I believe the solution is within the Church of Jesus Christ. I believe that the Church is the salt of the earth,

the light of the world. But, "if the salt have lost his savour [if it doesn't change the situation; if it doesn't refine the world; if it doesn't hold back the forces of corruption] . . . it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men" (Matt. 5:13).

That is where the Church of America is headed at the moment. But it doesn't need to happen. Do you know the remedy? Repent, get right with God, and get right in your home. Don't go around the world offering a solution to a problem when it doesn't work in your own home. That's ridiculous. If you haven't got more than misery and disharmony to export, don't export it!

The Church has its eyes so far on the end of the world that it can't see what's happening at the end of its nose. The first thing that you need to do is to get right with the people closest to you. Start there. Be reconciled. Lay down your bitterness, your resentment, your hatred.

## FEELINGS VS. THE WILL

Some people say to me, "Brother Prince, I don't feel I can forgive." I've got good news for you — you don't have to *feel*! You have to *decide*. It's not your emotions; it's your will. A great deal of contemporary preaching is totally misdirected because it is aimed at people's emotions, and thus all it produces is emotions. But every single preacher whom God has really used to change lives preached to people's wills. Finney said, "I'm not interested in anything but the will." So you do not have to *feel* forgiveness; you have to *will* forgiveness. If you are a born-again child of God, it is within your power to do it.

Jesus breathed on His disciples and said, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." And if you retain a person's sin, you are retained in your own sin. You are tied by a cord to that person. You may have divorced your husband twenty years ago, but if you have not

(continued on page 13)



# FORGIVE, AND BE HEALED!

by Francis MacNutt

Forgiving others directly  
affects our physical health.



**T**he first and deepest kind of healing that Christ brings is the forgiveness of our sins. Our repentance and God's forgiveness — they are emphasized by every Christian denomination. No one doubts that Jesus died for our sins and took them away, provided we do our part and repent. This is salvation and healing at the deepest level.

What I have come to see, though, is how intimately the forgiveness of sins is connected with bodily and emotional healing. They are not separate. In fact, far from being a sign of God's blessing, much physical sickness is a direct sign that we are not right with God or our neighbor:

... a person who eats and drinks without recognizing the Body is eating and drinking his own condemnation. In fact, that is why many of you are weak and ill and some of you have died. If only we recollected ourselves, we should not be punished like that. But when the Lord does punish us like that, it is to correct us and stop us from being condemned with the world (1 Cor. 11:29–32).

Here St. Paul ascribes some of the sickness and death affecting the early community at Corinth to the effects

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of sin; here, sickness is no blessing, but a punishment.

This connection of sin and sickness is now being brought to our attention again remarkably, not by the Church, but by psychologists and doctors who recognize that much, if not most, physical sickness has an emotional component:

Even cancer has recently been linked to emotion. Researchers are finding that cancer victims are often people who have long felt hopeless, who have believed that their lives are doomed to despair. The onset of the disease in many cases is associated with a series of overwhelming losses that make the person finally give up entirely.<sup>1</sup>



Although there is a danger of our playing amateur psychologist and reading too much into a person's physical sickness, these findings do show how appropriate was the angry reaction of Jesus to sickness ("He rebuked the fever") — much more appropriate than the reaction of some later Christian writers who saw most sickness as redemptive. Far from being redemptive it is often a sign precisely that we are not redeemed — that we are falling apart at a deeper level:

Ulcerative colitis is thought to develop when a predisposed person fails to express chronic resentment and anger. On an unconscious level, the mucous membrane of his colon *does* respond to these repressed emotions. The ensuing engorgement and hyperactivity produces bleeding . . .

Ulcerative colitis is often accompanied by severe depression and feelings of hopelessness and despair. The typical victim is immature and dependent, particularly on his mother. He often is perfectionistic and rigid and tends to be wary of other people.<sup>2</sup>

There is good evidence, then, that there is a very natural connection between much of our sickness and our spiritual and emotional health. For very human reasons we can see why physical sickness can symbolize a deeper sickness of the human person. (This profound realization caused Dr. Paul Tournier, as a physician, to abandon the merely physical treatment of his patients and to deepen his prayer life and to study psychology so that he could help to heal the entire human person who was sick at all levels of his being.)

Because of these relationships between all types of healing I have found it often helpful — sometimes essential — to consider a prayer for repentance or a prayer for inner healing first before praying for physical healing.

The story of the paralytic who was let through the roof by his friends and then forgiven his sins by Jesus before Jesus told him to pick up his cot and walk is often used to show that the

physical cure was a sign to the unbelieving Pharisees of Jesus' real power to forgive sins. That it was. But I also believe that Jesus was proceeding to heal the paralytic by stages in both areas of his life where he needed healing. Perhaps the sin and the paralysis were interconnected.

In my own ministry I have seen this connection borne out in striking ways. Once while giving a retreat at the Carmelite Retreat House in Aylesford, Illinois, we (Mrs. Barbara Shlemon, Sister Jeanne Hill, O.P., and I) conducted a communal penance service in which I stressed the need to forgive enemies and then gave the people (some 200 were making the retreat) the time to forgive anyone who had ever hurt them. The communal penance was followed by a prayer for inner healing. Nowhere in this service did I mention physical healing. Yet, two persons testified immediately afterwards that they had received physical cures. One was a man who had suffered constant chest pain since

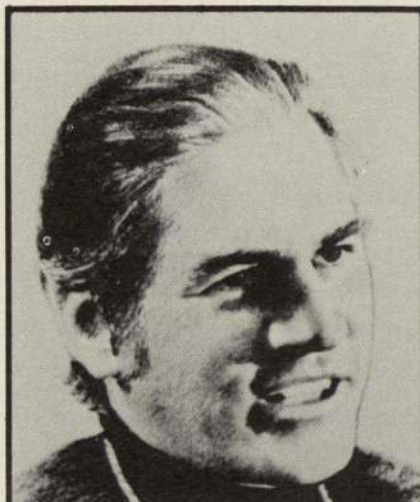
undergoing open-heart surgery. During the communal penance when he was asked to think of someone who had hurt him, he thought of his boss, a man he regarded as unjust. At first, he wasn't going to forgive him, but then with all the time allowed, he entered into a prayer of forgiveness. At that moment all the painful effects of the open-heart surgery left him. A similar thing happened in July, 1973, when I conducted a repentance service at the West Virginia Camp Farthest Out. Afterwards a young woman came up to me and said that a pylonidal cyst had been instantly healed at the moment she was able to repent of a long-standing grudge.

### FORGIVENESS: THE MOST IMPORTANT FORM OF REPENTANCE

These examples indicate that the key form of repentance we need is to forgive our enemies. I have found that many sins do not block God's healing power to the same extent as does a lack of forgiveness. I understand better than I used to why Jesus laid such a heavy stress on forgiving enemies when he talked about prayer. He doesn't talk nearly as much about drunkenness and lust as he does about being unforgiving. Furthermore, he often seems to connect forgiving enemies with the Father's answering our prayers:

I tell you therefore: everything you ask and pray for, believe that you have it already, and it will be yours. And when you stand in prayer, forgive whatever you have against anybody, so that your Father in heaven may forgive your failings too (Mk. 11:24-25).

I used to consider such passages as a kind of jumping from one subject to another: in one sentence Jesus enjoins faith in prayer; in the next he enjoins us to forgive. But now I see that the two ideas are intimately connected. It's as if God's saving, healing, forgiving love cannot flow into us unless we are ready to let it flow out to others. If we deny forgiveness and healing to others, God's love cannot flow into us. It's all part of the great commandment



**FATHER FRANCIS MacNUTT**, one of the first Catholics to be involved in the charismatic renewal and in the practice of praying for healing in prayer groups, has a B.A. from Harvard, and M.F.A. from Catholic University of America, and a Ph.D. from Aquinas Institute of Theology. He is the author of a number of books and articles, and is internationally recognized for his healing ministry.



in which loving our neighbor is part of the same commandment as loving God. "I love God only as much as I love my worst enemy." There is a direct relationship between our willingness to love others and the healing ministry:

Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge, and you will not be judged yourselves; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned yourselves; grant pardon and you will be pardoned. Give and there will be gifts for you: a full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap; because the amount you measure out is the amount you will be given back (Lk. 6:36-38).

To paraphrase: if you forgive, you will be forgiven; if you are willing to heal all others, including your enemies, you will be healed. The first condition if we seek healing is to cast out sin, especially the roots of bitterness.

Yet, for some reason, we seem to be insensitive to our worst sins: those of bitterness and resentment. Sins of drunkenness we detect with the same sensitivity with which the nonsmoker sniffs cigarette fumes lingering from last night's party, but we are not nearly so sensitive to our bitterness and anger.

Illustrative of the bitterness that often wracks Christian churches that are very sensitive on such issues as smoking and drinking is a section of history I was just reading today:

All went well with the "Tomlinson Church of God" until the death of its founder in 1943 when a power struggle developed between his two sons, Milton and Homer, for control of the church. In a bewildering set of moves and counter-moves, the younger brother Milton, who was not a minister but a printer, was elected as "General Overseer." After Milton's accession to power, Homer was inexplicably expelled from the church. Following this development, Homer went to New York City where he founded a third denomination which he christened "The Church of God, World Headquarters." In March 1953, the former "Tomlin-

son" Church of God with Milton as Bishop and General Overseer changed its name to "The Church of God of Prophecy," which it is claimed, designates it as the one, true "Church of God."<sup>3</sup>

We feel we have a right not to forgive; in justice let there be an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. We have a good reason for exacting vengeance we feel (witness the attitude of some Christians toward amnesty for true conscientious objectors who fled the U.S. to avoid serving in the Vietnam War).

Yet we have the Lord's words, "You have learned how it was said: 'eye for eye and tooth for tooth.' But I say to you: offer the wicked man no resistance" (Mt. 5:38-39). Upon this John L. McKenzie, S.J., comments:

The law of revenge was an ancient custom of the Near East that protected individuals by obliging the next of kin to avenge injury or murder. . . . The laws of the Pentateuch are actually restrictions that limit the injury inflicted by the avenger to injury proportionate to the damage done by the aggressor. The customary principle of self-defense is rejected by this saying of Jesus; and the customary principle is not replaced by another principle of self-defense. This saying is probably the most paradoxical of all the sayings of the passage and has certainly been the object of more rationalization than any other. . . . It is difficult to see how the principle of non-resistance and yielding could be more clearly stated. The rationalizations of the words of Jesus do not show that his words are impractical or exaggerated, but simply that the Christian world has never been ready and is not ready now to live according to this ethic.<sup>4</sup>

In praying for healing the most common phenomenon we experience is the sensation of heat, which we ordinarily associate with human love, with the warmth of friendship. On the contrary, cold is associated with the presence of evil.

One sensation recurs frequently, both in accounts of demoniacal possession and in those of meta-

physical experiences. The subjects and the assistants experience a sudden feeling of glacial cold, which often seems to emanate from the walls. At a Sabbath, the devil's arrival is signalized by an icy chill and a sensation of freezing physical contact. Cold hands close about the neck of the possessed; a cold wind blows suddenly. Fear, making the flesh creep, and the chill of the extremities, partly explain this sensation of cold; but sometimes it seems inexplicable. It is generally accompanied by sexual frigidity.<sup>5</sup>

Heat and cold, symbolizing love and hate are not, I believe, accidental concomitants of God's total healing and its opposite, the death wish of the devil. Life and death are here in conflict. Too often, though, we ourselves block physical healing through our own coldness, our own resentment and lack of forgiveness. I can see more clearly now why St. James in his passage on praying for the sick with anointing, also encourages confession of sins: "So confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, and this will cure you" (Jas. 5:16).

I remember being asked by a woman to pray for an inner healing. When we talked about her childhood, she indicated that her deepest problem, an unreasoning hatred of men, including her husband, went back to harsh treatment and derision that her brothers had heaped upon her as a little girl. Before praying for that healing, I asked her to forgive her brothers. This she refused to do. I told her that this would block any healing. She still refused. When I asked her why she hung on to her resentment, even if she was being destroyed by it, she thought for a while and then replied that, if she forgave her brothers, it would take away her last excuse for being the kind of person she was (she could no longer blame them). After praying a short time more she realized how contrary this was to her Christian commitment and to her professed desire to be whole. With tears she forgave her brothers as best she could. She then received the deep healing she was seeking.

To sum it all up: the more I pray



with people for healing the more I discover the close interrelation between all forms of healing. The churches have long known the power of Christ to forgive sins, but what I realize with increased intensity is that:

1) Our physical sickness, far from being a redemptive blessing, is often a sign that we are not redeemed, not whole at a spiritual level.

2) Physical healing often *requires first a forgiveness of sin* or an inner healing.

3) The most important repentance is of *bitterness or resentment*, sins which Christians often do not recognize as sins in themselves.

4) Again, *love* is the best remedy to break through the coldness, the hurt and bitterness that block God's healing power from flowing into us.

With all these considerations I understand better than before what Jesus was getting at when he pointed to the woman who had poured ointment all over his feet at Simon's banquet:

"Simon," he said, "you see this woman? I came into your house, and you poured no water over my feet, but she has poured out her tears over my feet and wiped them away with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but she has been covering my feet with kisses ever since I came in. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my head with ointment. For this reason I tell you that her sins, her many sins, must have been forgiven her, or she would not have shown such great love. It is the man who is forgiven little who shows little love." Then he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." Those who were with him at table began to say to themselves, "Who is this man, that he even forgives sins?" But he said to the woman, "Your faith saved you; go in peace" (Lk. 7:44-50).

Somehow, the woman's love has been unblocked, her warmth makes it clear that forgiveness, the healing of her spirit, has taken place. To Jesus, the flow of her love is the sign that she is receiving the forgiving, healing love of his Father. ☞

#### FOOTNOTES:

<sup>1</sup> Howard R. and Martha E. Lewis, *Psychosomatics: How Your Emotions Can Damage Your Health* (New York: The Viking Press, 1972), p. 7. This whole book, giving a popularized version of medical research that connects many diseases with an emotional and moral component, is well worth reading.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>3</sup> Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 195-196.

<sup>4</sup> "The Gospel According to Matthew," *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), pp. 72-73.

<sup>5</sup> Jean Vinchon, "Diabolic Possession" in *Soundings in Satanism*, ed. Frank Sheed (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1972), p. 4.

## BOOK AVAILABLE!

If you have enjoyed this article by Francis MacNutt and would like to read his entire work entitled *Healing*, you may order it by checking the appropriate response on our back page order form.

### THE BARRIER OF UNFORGIVENESS

(continued from page 9)

forgiven him, you are still tied to him.

I had the most laughable thing happen not long ago at a small meeting. A lady came up to me and said, "Brother Prince, I want you to pray for me. You see, I live in a district where all the other people drink beer. We're the only family in the neighborhood that doesn't drink beer. I want to get out of the area."

Every sentence she spoke contained the word "beer." After a while I said to her, "Sister, do you realize that you are an alcoholic in reverse? You're just as much taken up with beer as the man who is a slave to drinking it. I don't believe if you moved to a different area things would be any better, because the problem is not in the people, it's in you." Then I asked her about her husband, "Have you forgiven him?"

"Yes," she said, "he used to drink beer, but he's saved now and I've forgiven him."

"That's wonderful," I replied. "Is

there anybody you haven't forgiven?"

"Well," she said, "I couldn't forgive the bartender!"

"Oh," I said, "that's too bad. If you can't forgive the bartender, God can't forgive you."

"Well," she said, "I don't know."

So I told her to sit down and make up her mind whether she could forgive the bartender or not. In about fifteen minutes she came back and said, "I've decided."

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

"I'm going to forgive him."

So I led her in a prayer, "Lord, I forgive the bartender just as I want you to forgive me." When she prayed that prayer after me her burden lifted, a deep sigh came out of her, and she started to sob. The knots were untied and ten minutes later she walked out of that place embracing everybody. How typical! Just think of letting a bartender ruin everything for you! And yet that's typical of a multitude of believers.

Forgiveness is simple. It's an act of

the will and an utterance of the lips. You decide it; you say it; and that's it. Name the person. "Lord, I forgive my husband; I forgive my son-in-law." Be specific. "As I want You to forgive me, Lord, I forgive them." You say it and it's done. Don't go back and do it again. If that temptation arises say, "Lord, on Friday, I forgave her." It's settled.

What if you still feel resentment? Start praying for the person involved. You cannot resent someone and pray for them at the same time. By praying you replace the negative with the positive.

If you are to be forgiven, God requires that you forgive others. If you are to have your prayers answered, you must forgive. If you are to experience the joy, the peace and the fulfillment you were meant to have as a Christian, forgiveness must be in operation in your life. The choice is up to you! You can choose to allow unforgiveness to ruin your life, or you can decide, by an act of your will, to forgive and be set free. ☞



# BIBLE STUDY

## FORGIVENESS

Jesus was a man who took a vow very seriously, and in Matthew 16:18 He vowed that He would build His Church. Shortly after that, (Matthew 18:15-17) He gave detailed instructions about how His friends, who were both to build and to be stones in that Church, were to be in continual unity as they walked in forgiveness and reconciliation.

(Bible Study answers are found on page 16.)

1. Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 and answer the following questions:
  - (a) By whom does God reconcile us to Himself? \_\_\_\_\_
  - (b) What ministry has He given each one of us? \_\_\_\_\_
  - (c) What are we to beseech or beg people to do? \_\_\_\_\_
2. If a person has come into right standing with God, he will demonstrate it by his love for God. 1 John 4:21 equates a love for God with \_\_\_\_\_ for our \_\_\_\_\_.
3. If you \_\_\_\_\_ your brother whom you have seen, it is impossible to \_\_\_\_\_ God whom you have not seen. (1 John 4:20)
4. Who destroys his neighbor? (Proverbs 11:9) \_\_\_\_\_  
What weapon does he use? \_\_\_\_\_.
5. If a man hates a fellow Christian what is he? (1 John 3:15) \_\_\_\_\_.
6. And where is he? (1 John 2:9) \_\_\_\_\_
7. According to 1 John 1:7, the \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus cleanses us only as we walk in the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ one with another.
8. Brothers in Christ show forth their reconciliation with God only as they live in harmony one with another. According to Leviticus 19:18 we should not \_\_\_\_\_ a \_\_\_\_\_ against a fellow Christian.
9. We should always \_\_\_\_\_ to keep the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Spirit in the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ (Eph. 4:3)
10. Walking in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ as we forbear one another in \_\_\_\_\_ (Eph. 4:2)

11. Colossians 3:13 teaches that we should forbear and \_\_\_\_\_ one another and if any man has a \_\_\_\_\_ against any he should \_\_\_\_\_ even as \_\_\_\_\_ forgave.
12. Read Ephesians 4:31 and list the five things that should be put away.
  - (a) \_\_\_\_\_ (b) \_\_\_\_\_ (c) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (d) \_\_\_\_\_ (e) \_\_\_\_\_
13. If a man has bitterness toward his wife, what will happen to his prayers? (1 Peter 3:7) \_\_\_\_\_.
14. Read Hebrews 12:14-15 and answer the following:
  - (a) What should we follow with all men? \_\_\_\_\_
  - (b) What could trouble us if allowed to spring up? \_\_\_\_\_
  - (c) What would be the result of it? \_\_\_\_\_.
15. Proverbs 15:17 teaches that it is better to have a simple meal of herbs served with \_\_\_\_\_ than a steak served with \_\_\_\_\_.
16. If a man hates his neighbor what is he void of? (Proverbs 11:12) \_\_\_\_\_.
17. According to Matthew 6:14 if you \_\_\_\_\_ men their trespasses your heavenly \_\_\_\_\_ will also \_\_\_\_\_ you.
18. How can a person avoid the following? (Luke 6:37)
  - (a) Being judged: \_\_\_\_\_
  - (b) Being condemned: \_\_\_\_\_
  - (c) Being unforgiven: \_\_\_\_\_
19. Believers are to have the godly attribute of mercy. According to Nehemiah 9:17, God is always \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ and is slow to \_\_\_\_\_ and is great in \_\_\_\_\_.
20. When a person is merciful and forgives his brother what does he do for his own soul? (Proverbs 11:17) \_\_\_\_\_.
21. But if he is cruel and unforgiving, he \_\_\_\_\_ his own \_\_\_\_\_.
22. Use Luke 7:44-47 as a guideline and answer the following:
  - (a) What can be expected of a person that is forgiven of much? \_\_\_\_\_
  - (b) Who will love little? \_\_\_\_\_



# A Family Divided...



... but then united through forgiveness.

by Mrs. Dennis Ramsey

**W**hen Dennis and I were married our relationship with our families was good. I had once, before marriage, been cautioned about in-laws. The comment had been something like, "You will not only marry the man but also the family," meaning his family will be yours so make sure all is well. Needless to say, as a young bride this thought hardly entered my mind.

We lived a distance from our relatives after marriage so I had the notion that Dennis was all mine, except for the occasional weekend visits home. But this day-dream-type marriage didn't last long. Soon, jealousy began to create division between my mother-in-law and myself. Dennis was her only son and the youngest child in the family. His father had died when Dennis was only nine years old so she had reason to have a deeper than usual love for him, since he was the only "man" in her life for so long. After I entered the picture, I expected all his love and attention. This of course resulted in jealousy between Mom and

me because we didn't want to share Dennis.

The relationship with my mother-in-law remained stable for quite a while after our marriage, and with the rest of the family all was well. Then after we had been married about eighteen months, Mom had a stroke which left her permanently disabled. Since she was unable to live alone, it was necessary to keep Mom in our home or with the daughters in the family.

Throughout the next few years we had Mom in our home off and on because Dennis' three sisters were also helping with her care. During this time we had our first child and the second one was on the way. A handicapped mother-in-law, a small child and being pregnant again was too much for me at this time. I did not know Jesus so all

of my efforts were of self. Therefore, I didn't last too long when all these problems came my way.

Still within me was the need for Dennis to be devoted totally to me and our children. Although he never did anything to cause me to doubt his love and attention, I still felt I needed to keep him to myself. I was very selfish but in ignorance did not see it. And of course, Mom ached to have his love also as this was her son and the man of the family that she depended upon. Satan had us trapped into feelings of jealousy because we couldn't share Dennis in his rightful place in our lives — as a son to her and a husband to me.

Toward the end of my pregnancy with our second child, my nerves reached the breaking point. We met with the rest of the family involved in helping with Mom's care and told them we would no longer be giving our assistance. This hurt my sisters and brothers-in-law very much and left a bigger load of responsibility on them. Tempers flared, words shot back and forth, and all ended in our making a stormy departure from everyone.

*JEAN RAMSEY lives in Northern Illinois with her husband Dennis Ramsey and their three daughters, ages 10, 8 and 1. In addition to her ministry as a wife and mother, Jean and her family are active in the local Body of Christ.*



For more than five years we hardly saw any of Dennis' family. Other than a rare visit to see Mom or pick her up at their homes to go out and eat with us, we had no contact with them at all. During this time of separation many more problem situations befell us — job troubles, various kinds of illness, financial strain and an unhappy marriage which showed signs of falling apart. We tried all kinds of remedies — job changes, consultation with doctors, mental health counselling, marriage counselling, therapy, even plans for a separation from one another — but nothing really fulfilled the need. It was during this time that we found Jesus as Savior and Lord. We cried out to God to help us and He showed us the way through Jesus.

Shortly after being born again and baptized in the Holy Spirit, God spoke to us both regarding our relationship with Dennis' family. He told us we had to go back, apologize, ask their forgiveness and take our share of responsibility in the care of Mom. We contacted the families and asked to see them again. One by one we went to them. Then we began to follow through with each couple, doing what

the Lord Jesus had instructed us to do. Within a short time our relationship with the three sisters and their husbands was on its way to a real healing in Jesus Christ. We found that they were as burdened over the division in the family as we were. The breach had created tension in them toward one another, and God wanted this dissolved also. We also went to Mom and confessed our negligence and asked her forgiveness for the past years. Like most every mother or father she welcomed us with her love. We immediately reassumed our responsibility for Mom's care. Not only did we give her physical care, but we began to share much spiritual life in Jesus with her.

Although Mom was with us only periodically thereafter, we came to have a close and deep relationship. God gave us three years of reconciliation before Mom passed away from this life. Jesus removed all the former ugly jealousies and He gave Mom and me the privilege of loving and sharing a wonderful man. As we spent days together in the house she could see my love as a wife being extended to Dennis in the effort to please him.

And she was blessed to see him content and happy. I feel God gave us a rare relationship as women, and I thank Him.

Over three years have passed since we first went to Dennis' sisters and asked their forgiveness. We have experienced complete reconciliation. Those past ugly years are all behind us. And through the experience we've all learned how really precious a gift God has given us in one another. 🙏

## BIBLE STUDY ANSWERS

(From page 14)

1. a. Jesus Christ, b. reconciliation, c. be reconciled to God; 2. Love, brothers; 3. Hate, love; 4. A hypocrite, his mouth; 5. Murderer; 6. In darkness; 7. Blood, light, fellowship; 8. Bear, grudge; 9. Endeavor, unity, bond, peace; 10. Lowliness, meekness, love; 11. Forgive, quarrel, forgive, Christ; 12. a. Bitterness, b. wrath, c. anger, d. clamor, e. evil speaking; 13. They will be hindered; 14. a. Peace, b. root of bitterness, c. many would be defiled; 15. Love, hatred; 16. Wisdom; 17. Forgive, Father, forgive; 18. a. By not judging, b. by not condemning, c. by forgiving; 19. Ready, pardon, anger, kindness; 20. Good; 21. Troubles, flesh; 22. a. Much love, b. one who has been forgiven little.

## The End of the Essay

The February issue of *New Wine* Magazine will mark the end of our Essay of the Month feature. This final month of the essay, we invite you to submit an article on any theme of your choosing concerning any aspect of your Christian experience. (They will be due to us by November 15. See below for details).

We want to thank all of you who contributed essays during the past months. Although many of those were never published, all the essays we received were inspiring to us at *New Wine*. As we conclude the Essay feature, we are grateful for the tremendous response from all of you, but even more for the beautiful testimonies and insights that you have shared with us. We hope it has meant as much for you to write these essays as it has for us to read them.

Again, thank you.

\* \* \* \* \*

Your essay should be written from your own experience and observation (preferably in the form of a testimony) and should be 1500 to 2000 words (or 4–6 typewritten, double-spaced pages). Please include a black and white photograph and short biography of yourself.

Send all manuscripts to *New Wine* Essays, P.O. Box 22888, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33335. If you wish to have your manuscript returned, enclose a self-addressed and stamped envelope.

(All published material becomes the property of *New Wine*).





## CHRISTIAN LEVERAGE IN NOVEMBER

These are the final days before a crucial election. The campaign rhetoric and clamor of publicity are reaching a zenith. We're being asked to choose. On November 2 we will select a President and Vice-President, 33 Senators, and 435 Congressmen. The 470 men and women we elect to serve at the national level will shape our nation's destiny in countless ways. The leadership they exert, the appointments they make, the legislation they enact, and the way they spend our tax dollars will determine our future. Likewise, state and local races and issues, many of which will have lasting significance, will be decided.

Why is this election so strategic? What is at stake? Why does it matter?

Most Christian leaders agree that our country is at a crossroads. We must decide *now* whether we will continue to move toward a humanistic, man-centered, man-directed government, or whether we will halt this slide, reverse the trend and begin to move toward God. Stripped of all its shadings and coloring, this is the issue we face. As Christians, we say, "Of course we *must* see His righteousness established in our highest offices." "We *must* elect men and women of integrity and sound character." "We *must* defeat issues which fly in the face of divine principles."

The question is, *how*? What should we do? What is our point of maximum leverage? How can we be most effective against the satanic forces which have declared open war, and would use the elective process to bind our freedom, and hinder God's purposes?

King Jehoshaphat faced this question when the enemies of his day were marching against him. The kings of

# INTERCESSORS REPORT

Moab, Ammon and Mt. Seir had amassed a vast army, intent on destroying Judah. Second Chronicles 20:3 describes King Jehoshaphat's response: *The King, in his fear, turned to the Lord, and proclaimed a fast, throughout Judah.* And the people "from all the cities" came together in intercessory prayer. The King stood in their midst and declared that God alone could save them from the attacking armies. God honored the prayer of the people of Judah, telling them not to fear, or be dismayed because of the great enemy multitude, "for the battle is not yours, but God's." The army of Judah took up their battle stations, but they never fought. A chorus appointed by Jehoshaphat went forth ahead of the army, singing praises to God; the enemy armies began to fight among themselves, and finally destroyed each other (2 Chron. 20:17-23).

What would happen today if we went to our knees in repentance, and trusted God to fight our battle for us? Becoming informed, being involved, and voting are essential of course. But trusting God, and giving Him thanks and praise for the victory is the greatest contribution we can make. *It is our point of maximum leverage!*

Towards this end, a National Prayer Congress will convene in Dallas from October 26 to 29 — just days before the election. It is anticipated that 10,000 or more Christians will come together to pray and call upon God in behalf of our nation. Thirty-four national Christian leaders will address this congress, including Dr. Billy Graham, Corrie ten Boom, Rex Humbard, Dr. Louis Evans, Sr., Pat Boone, Dr. W. A. Criswell, Charles Allen, Charles Colson, Dr. Harold Ockenga, Dr. and Mrs. Bill Bright and others. Each is vitally concerned about our nation, and is convinced we must

see a dramatic change in America's direction and soon.

This Prayer Congress will be a tremendous opportunity to proclaim our dependence on God, and acknowledge in unison that He alone can save us from peril that confronts us on every side. This will enable us as a Body, which all too often has been fragmented, to stand together against enemy forces and give thanks to God for His victory and our deliverance. *Why not attend?* (Registration information below.)

And here's another opportunity: Several concerned Americans from different walks of life have issued a "call for prayer and fasting" for the weekend preceding the election. Those leading the appeal include former U.S. Senator Harold Hughes, Dr. Kenneth Taylor, president of Tyndale House Publishers, and singer Norma Zimmer. The call urges a 24-hour period of fasting from 6 p.m. Friday October 29 to 6 p.m. Saturday October 30. Can we enter such a period of fasting and prayer with the same conviction that Jehoshaphat had, that God will provide the victory?

The need to pray and fast for America has never been more urgent. The opportunity to turn our nation around has never been greater. Now is the time. Let us say "Yes, Sir" to Almighty God and join with Him to make November 2 a turning point in history. 🙏

For a brochure and registration information write National Prayer Congress, 2525 Stemmons Frwy., Dallas, Texas 75207 or Call Toll free 1-800-527-5660, or contact:

John D. Beckett  
Intercessors For America  
P.O. Box D  
Elyria, Ohio 44035  
(216) 365-4141



**T**here is a cry among God's people — a cry for God to bring to us the prophet's voice. We know we need it, and God knows how badly we need it! But what worries me in the hearing of that cry is that we, like others to whom God attempted to speak, might be the first ones to stone or kill a prophet when God did send one. That is what happened to the men who delivered God's messages during Old Testament times. And look what happened during the days of the early church. Most of the apostles ended up being beheaded, stoned or crucified. In view of such treatment, a man would have to be a mental case to *want* to be a prophet.

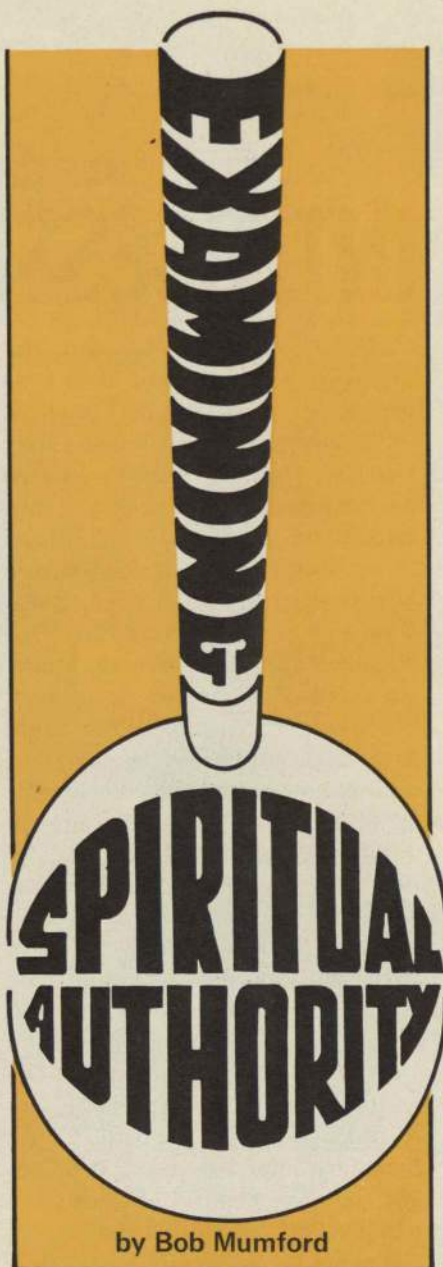
Why such violent reactions? Because the prophet's voice demands change. It penetrates the veneer of existing conditions and deals with the root cause — not with symptoms. The prophet refuses to play political or ecclesiastical games. He doesn't major in the minors, he goes to the heart of the problem. As a result, when you hear a prophet's message, you have one of two choices: heed his message and make the necessary changes, or kill the prophet. You may not kill him physically, but you can kill him in other ways.

So we see that to be a prophetic voice to our generation is risky business, for a prophet must be willing to stick out his neck and speak God's message regardless of the consequences. It's like the sign I once saw on the wall of a child's room:

**BEHOLD THE TURTLE,  
HE MAKES NO PROGRESS UNLESS  
HE STICKS HIS NECK OUT.**

A prophet must be willing to venture forth, cutting through all the tradition and religious paraphernalia which has collected over the centuries to demand change, even at the risk of his actions being interpreted and labeled as "anti-institutional." He must be willing to penetrate all the overgrowth of ecclesiastical trappings to get down to the grassroots of Christianity.

One time I was in a meeting of



ministers (mostly denominational) and one of the men spoke about the need for a prophetic voice today. The Lord began to move by His Spirit throughout the audience and He said to me, "Get up and say that they wouldn't recognize the prophet if I sent him. And that they, as ministers, would be the first ones to stone him." Being a good servant of God, I said, "No!" I didn't want to be the first one they would stone, so I said nothing, to my regret.

I am not "anti" anything; rather, I am *for* something. In this day when God's people are searching for reality, I am *for* a real understanding of the prophet's voice and message. I am *for*

understanding and ministering spiritual authority as it is presented throughout God's Word and as it should be understood and ministered today.

With this in mind, we want to examine three portions of Scripture which will introduce us to some thoughts on receiving and ministering spiritual authority. (1) We will listen to Jeremiah, that Old Testament prophet who wrote that he had to speak God's message, for it "burned like fire in his bones." (2) We will listen to some words of Jesus on ministering in obedience to God's commands; and (3) we will listen to Paul as he wrote to the believers in Corinth regarding building the Body of Christ.

*Consider the words of Jeremiah 23:16-32 (NAS):*

Thus says the Lord of hosts, "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are leading you into futility; They speak a vision of their own imagination, Not from the mouth of the Lord.

"They keep saying to those who despise Me, 'The Lord has said, "You will have peace" '; And as for every one who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart, They say, 'Calamity will not come upon you.'

"But who has stood in the council of the Lord, That he should see and hear His word? Who has given heed to His word and listened?

"Behold, the storm of the Lord has gone forth in wrath, Even a whirling tempest; It will swirl down on the head of the wicked.

"The anger of the Lord will not turn back Until He has performed and carried out the purposes of His heart; In the last days you will clearly understand it.

"I did not send *these* prophets, But they ran. I did not speak to them, But they prophesied.

"But if they had stood in My council, Then they would have announced My words to My people, And would have turned them back from their evil way And from the evil of their deeds."

"Am I a God who is near," declares the Lord, "And not a God far off?

"Can a man hide himself in



hiding places, So I do not see him?" declares the Lord. "Do I not fill the heaven and the earth?" declares the Lord.

"I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy falsely in My name, saying, 'I had a dream, I had a dream!'

"How long? Is there *anything* in the hearts of the prophets who prophesy falsehood, even *these* prophets of the deception of their own heart,

who intend to make My people forget My name by their dreams which they relate to one another, just as their fathers forgot My name because of Baal?

"The prophet who has a dream may relate *his* dream, but let him who has My word speak My word in truth. What does straw have *in common* with grain?" declares the Lord.

"Is not My word like fire?" declares the Lord, "and like a hammer which shatters a rock?

"Therefore behold, I am against the prophets," declares the Lord, "who steal My words from each other.

"Behold, I am against the prophets," declares the Lord, "who use their tongues and declare, '*The Lord declares.*'"

"Behold I am against those who have prophesied false dreams," declares the Lord, "and related them, and led My people astray by their falsehoods and reckless boasting; yet I did not send them or command them, nor do they furnish this people the slightest benefit," declares the Lord.

*Next, we want to read from Matthew, chapter 7, beginning at verse 15 (NAS).*

"Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheeps' clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

"You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thornbushes, nor figs from thistles, are they?

"Even so every good tree bears good fruit; but the rotten tree bears bad fruit.

"A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree produce good fruit.

"Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down, and thrown into the fire.

"So then, you will know them by their fruits."

"Not every one who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.

"Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'

"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; *depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.*'"

*Our final scripture passage is 1 Corinthians 3:9-19 (NAS).*

For we are God's fellow-workers; you are God's field, God's building.

According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise masterbuilder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it.

For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to *be* revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.

If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward.

If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.

Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?

If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.

Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become foolish that he may become wise.

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written: "*He is the one who catches the wise in their craftiness.*"

Now let me give you two quotes from current thoughts which are pertinent right here. The first one appeared in a local newspaper. Here's the headline: "Christian Time of

Penance and Lent — Some Fear Tradition Is Fading." And the paper quoted a pastor as saying, "Out of a congregation of a thousand, we will probably have less than one hundred people for our Lenten services."

This second quote from a monthly news bulletin, entitled "The Church Around the World" (Tyndale House Publishers, Feb. 1976), expresses similar thoughts: "Americans are the *most religious people* on earth. Forty percent attend church or synagogue weekly and only 6 percent state no religious preference. However, 75 percent *see no relationship between their religion and their judgments of right and wrong.*"

No relationship between God's Word and right and wrong? The above statistics are the background for what I believe God is saying to His people everywhere. If we will cut through the refuse and flack and begin to understand what the really deep issues are, I believe we will see that God is restoring to His people men who understand and exercise some spiritual authority.

The world and the Church are being confronted with critical questions. What do we hold onto? What do we hold loosely? What do we change? What do we throw out? Where do we go from here? What is God saying? How relevant is the Church? In the world and the Church there is tremendous fomentation because God is stirring the nest. But praying, believing men of God are rising up in this time to recognize what the issues really are.

## SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY — A KEY ISSUE OF OUR DAY

When I talk about spiritual authority, rather than speaking vaguely in some theological way I want to bring it right down where we live, because I believe the principle of receiving and exercising spiritual authority is the key issue of our day.

Our 17-year-old daughter, Beth, recently came to me deeply concerned about a friend of hers who is just a few months older than she. Beth said to me, "Daddy, my friend is sleeping around with all the boys. Can you help



her?" I told Beth that I would be glad to talk to her friend, but perhaps first it would be well for her to talk with the friend and find out just "where she was." I suggested they just sit and chat for awhile and then we would take it from there.

Later, Beth was able to talk with her friend and after they had about a two or three hour session together, Beth came back and asked if she could talk with me again.

Here is what Beth deduced from their talk. "Daddy, I found out what's wrong with my friend. Her Daddy doesn't care where she goes, what she does, or who she runs with. No matter what she does, her Daddy gives her money and gives her things, and she just runs anywhere." Then Beth started to weep. "Oh, Dad, am I glad that I have somebody who loves me!"

## Monthly Day of Prayer and Fasting

At the Chicago Church Summit Conference in September 1975, national Christian leaders established the first Friday of every month in 1976 as a day of united prayer and fasting for all Christians in America.

*New Wine*, in conjunction with Intercessors for America, will be publishing each month a suggested prayer focus so that the collective effect of all our readers' prayers may be concentrated upon a specific area of need.

On October 1, the prayer focus will be: *the coming elections*. Pray that the Holy Spirit will reveal the character of each candidate running for political office, and that He will also reveal the truth concerning the issues at stake, so that the people of God would vote in accordance with His will and purpose.

Then, on November 5, the day of prayer and fasting for that month, the prayer focus will be: *abortion*. Pray that the people and legislators of our nation might know God's attitude toward abortion, and the serious implications and consequences of abortion legislation in our country.

Then I started to weep and said, "You mean you're glad that I say to you, 'You get your little self in here by 9:30?' " Beth nodded and then added this observation: "What I saw was that she doesn't have anybody who loves her enough to care whether she's in by 9:30 or 10:00 P.M."

This characterizes the real issue today. It is not that we should be afraid of spiritual authority; rather, we should be afraid that nobody really loves us enough to *care* what we're doing to ourselves. That's the real issue.

People have accused me of being "the sheriff" in the Kingdom — of going around trying to straighten everybody out. They say, "Well, Mumford's trying to bring us under his authority." Don't kid yourself. I've got all I can say grace over right now. Rather than desiring to straighten everybody out, I've found that a proper understanding of spiritual authority causes one to say, "No thanks, I don't need any more responsibility."

Well, what is the key issue? In this day of pleasure and prosperity, permeated as it is with a devil-may-care, antinomian attitude, God is calling us to shape up! And spiritual authority is high on His agenda.

Let's first take a look at what spiritual authority is *not* — and then we'll examine what it *is*. After that we will need to establish some safeguards for its proper functioning.

By spiritual authority we do not mean control, domination or interference. Neither are we talking about a form of ecclesiastical authority. The problem we face is that the moment we say "spiritual authority," people think we are trying to start a new ecclesiastical system or creating a General Motors type Corporation. Others think we are running the United States Marine Corps. It is none of these.

Spiritual authority is not characterized by a self-assertive, militant or commanding attitude. Neither is it personified by a wheeling-dealing organizational man, nor by a positive-thinking manipulator. These traits do

not originate in God, nor do they produce godly results in people.

Spiritual authority is not the gift of omniscience you receive when you get ordained. Ordination may help, but in itself it is *not* spiritual authority. Neither is seminary training, theology, quoting Scripture, a string of titles, having your own business cards or private parking place. Nor is it leading a charismatic prayer group, even with signs following. That's a gift ministry, not spiritual authority. That's the authority of a believer and any Christian can function in that way.

So, what is spiritual authority? As I understand it, it has to do with these words: *personal integrity*. *Spiritual authority is the authority of personal integrity!* In other words, it is something you *are*, not something you *have*. It represents God's work in a person's life. It is when a man speaks of what he knows, what he has experienced, and what he has come to understand. When a man speaks of what he knows and what he's experienced, then he has authority with those who hear him. When a man with authority speaks, men know that he knows what he's talking about, because the words he speaks have been made flesh within the life of that man.

Both Matthew and Mark state concerning this quality in Jesus: "When Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as *one having authority*, and not as the scribes." See Matthew 7:28-29 and Mark 1:22.

People *know*. How? Well, in answer to that question, let's explore what spiritual authority really *is* and how it is received, listing seven points we must consider.



### 1. Get your own act together!

This means you! Not your neighbor, your wife, the board of deacons, the



other brothers, or the leader — but you! The authority of personal integrity means that a man can speak with authority because he has his own life and world put together. The world is looking for men who know how to live what they speak about.

I have been in the ministry long enough to know that preachers are not exempt from personal problems — financial, sexual, personality hang-ups, disobedient children, and right on down the line. That is why when some men stand up and say, “Today I am going to declare to you the Word of God,” it doesn’t do anything to the listeners. There’s no life to back up the Word. It’s empty because he doesn’t have his own act together. He may have a girlfriend on the other side of town, or he may owe so much to his creditors that he has forfeited his credibility.

Ministers are being “picked off” one after another today — morally, financially, and by involvement in the occult. Do you know why? Because there has been a failure to understand that the Lord Jesus Christ first wants His Kingdom established in us, before we can legitimately declare it to others. Otherwise, the hypocrisy of knowing when to say “Hallelujah” at the right time, even while your conscience is smiting you because your life is such a mess will frustrate your attempts to effectively exercise spiritual authority.

Unless a man heeds God’s convicting voice when He says, “I never sent you. You ran — with your memory verses and degrees, but I never sent you. Stay home and get your own world cleaned up,” then proper use of spiritual authority will be impossible.

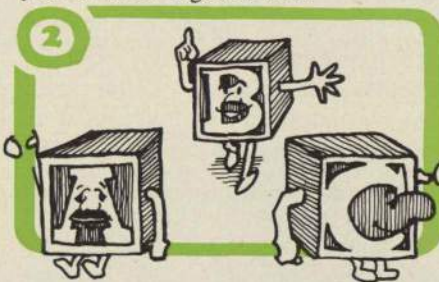
God earnestly desires to see that authority come into our lives, and often He is far more ready to bestow it than we are to receive it . . . for its arrival necessitates our “getting our act together.” Two of the major hindrances which must be exposed and eliminated if we are to understand authority are: (a) *hidden suspicions* and (b) *covered sin*. When either of these two obstacles stands in the way

of our being what God wants us to be what happens? We hide behind a facade of preaching louder and longer, or beating our tambourines harder, or complaining more about all the bad things others are doing. Let’s take a closer look at these two roadblocks.

(A) *Hidden Suspicions*: Because we fear people knowing what we are really like on the inside, we cover up our weaknesses and our hidden doubts and fears concerning others. We are afraid to admit to the reality of the feelings we have hidden in the deep recesses of our lives.

(B) *Covered Sin*: Perhaps one example will serve to communicate our point here. Recently we dealt with a family in which there always seemed to be trouble. Although the father was in a place of leadership, there just wasn’t the degree of spiritual authority necessary to keep the family out of difficulty. Things were always in confusion in the father’s life and finally, the reason came to the surface. The man finally admitted that he had an illegitimate child, a fact that he had kept hidden for 19 years, and had never told his wife about. Oh, to wrestle 19 years with a covered sin!

Do you want to know what spiritual authority is? Then you have to get your own act together first!



## 2. Seek God for your own placement and share in authority.

This means that if you are going to have spiritual authority, you will most likely be a specialist in some particular realm. In all fields of endeavor, there are general practioners, and then there are specialists.

Let’s say a newcomer arrives in Fort Lauderdale and says, “Bob could you help me?” Looking into the person’s situation, I find Ouija boards, a grandmother who was a witch, plus deep involvement in the occult. So what do

I do? I call Derek Prince! That’s his area. That’s not my particular share of spiritual authority. What is? The dealings of God, divine guidance, the Kingdom of God. That’s my realm.

There are men who speak as though they are an authority about everything. They know all about airplanes, baseball, politics, marriage — everything. In the Navy we called them “sea lawyers.” If you caught a fish twenty inches long, he caught a fish twenty-five inches long. Do you know something? That is a particular disease of preachers! Most don’t know their sphere.

Just by way of observation, every professional field in the nation has a referral system except the ministerial field. You go to a dentist and he says, “I don’t fix that. Go over to Dr. So-and-So . . . he does root canals.” But most ministers attempt to handle all situations that come to them, even if the problem is out of their league. However, the day is coming when increasingly, men of God will recognize their placement or specialty and abide in it.



## 3. Never use spiritual authority to impress, control or dominate.

When God brings you into some measure of spiritual authority, take heed how you use it. Never speak out of your office. “You will obey me because I am the pastor here.” That is using spiritual authority to control, and it is a misuse of authority!

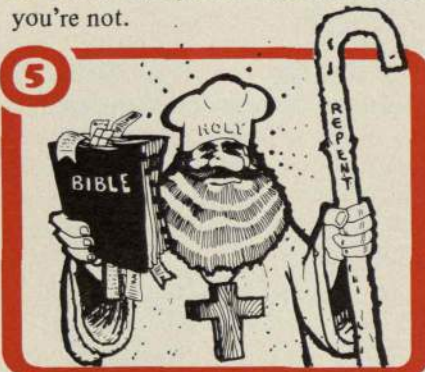


## 4. Recognize when you are borrowing authority.



Let me give you an example of borrowing authority. My 7-year old son goes over to my 14-year old son and says, "Daddy says to give me that \$.50 you owe me." Or what about name dropping: "The other day Billy Graham and I were out on the golf course . . . I just say that for the glory of God."

Quoting others and stealing words come under the heading of this danger. We need to recognize when we are borrowing authority as contrasted with when we are moving in our own. The result of succumbing to this tendency is that before long, you get to believing your own advertising. It's one thing to deceive others; it's another thing to deceive yourself, and to think that you're something that you're not.



**5. Never create the illusion of spiritual authority by using outward "trap-pings" — titles, wearing of crosses, and carrying of Bible for effect, etc.**

We've all seen crosses of outlandish proportion being used to impress. And Bibles stuffed full of bookmarks, giving the impression of constant usage. Then there's special clothes. Some men wear clerics because it affords entrance into certain places and broader acceptance of ministry among certain people. That is justified. But others wear them for ostentation, and that's different. Something happens to the person in the latter case. He begins to believe he's something he's not. There is a certain false authority and very often the one promoting himself knows that he is illegally conveying the impression of authority which is not really his. What he may not realize is that God also knows his motive, and He's not at all impressed.



**6. Do not reach for recognition, ministry or position that the Lord hasn't moved you into.**

Don't ever maneuver a situation so that you are at the right place at the right time by your own manipulation. *Don't reach for anything!* The Son did nothing of Himself, but rather did His Father's good pleasure. The Son never entered a door until His Father opened it. That is why Scripture says doors are to be knocked on — not torn off their hinges. Please terminate all spiritual politics! We need to stop the reaching and coercing and grabbing which is so prevalent today. Let us learn how to serve, believing the scripture that says promotion does not come from the east or the west, but from God (Ps. 75:6). It also says in 1 Peter 5:6 that if we humble ourselves, God will exalt us in due time.

We may see another brother ministering effectively in a particular area and look at that and say, "Oh, Lord, I wish you'd use me like that." Oh, no! Don't be too hasty to reach for that. I can remember some years ago going up to one of my professors in Bible School after hearing him preach a dynamic message from Psalm 29 on the power released when God speaks, and asking him if I might have his notes for that message. And he said to me, "Sure, Mumford, you can have the notes. Just remember that these notes are like a big pair of trousers. When you grow up to fit into them, then you can preach this word."

To this day, I still have those notes, and I haven't preached that message yet. I'm determined not to push myself into things before I'm ready and before it is the proper time.

Don't reach, grab or stretch for things that don't belong to you. Spend the time you have laying good founda-

tions in your life. God is anxious to use you and He wants to pour His authority into you — even more anxious to pour it out, than you are to receive it. But let it be in *His* time!



**7. Don't interpret everyone and everything that disagrees with you as a personal challenge.**

It is a fact about small men and insecure individuals that as soon as anyone disagrees with them, they take it as a personal challenge. People often say to me, "I'm defending God," to which I reply: "Know what I'd do if I were you? I'd let Him defend you." Don't be a crusader. Don't take everything personally. If it's truth, it will stand. It's amazing how tender and humble we can become after we have spoken with such certainty, only the Lord didn't back us up.

Before we discuss the exercise of spiritual authority, let's consider the nature of spiritual authority. Again, there are seven tests which can be applied here:

1. Spiritual authority does not restrict — it brings liberty.
2. Spiritual authority does not limit — it brings freedom.
3. Spiritual authority does not oppress — it brings creativity.
4. Spiritual authority does not bring servility — but it does engender the serving spirit of Christ.
5. Spiritual authority is not parentalism — but it is fatherhood . . . spiritual fathers.
6. Spiritual authority does not destroy a person's decision-making process — but it does mean that he will never have to make a weighty decision alone.
7. Spiritual authority is not of law — but of grace.

May I just make two remarks on these seven aspects of the nature of spiritual authority. First, I have never



known such freedom and liberty in all of my life as I have known since I have walked in the counsel of my brothers. A man under authority can enjoy all of the assets we have listed — liberty, freedom, creativity and grace. Second, we need to take seriously the word “command” and “commandment.” Sixty-nine times in the Greek New Testament this word “entole” is used. Command/commandment denotes authority. Jesus gave a new commandment to us by which He said all men would know that we were His disciples — “Love one another.” And the law of love is the base from which spiritual authority springs.

### EXERCISING SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY

Now that we have discovered what spiritual authority *is* and *is not*, and established some guidelines for its purpose, what does it mean to exercise spiritual authority? Let's begin by admitting there are such things as false prophets. Are they men with long white beards and a shepherd's staff saying, “Yea, Yea”? No, they are men who once were good prophets who ceased to hear God's Word and ceased to keep their own act together. Their marriage fell apart, their finances fell apart, their children . . . their sexual lives . . . all fell apart — and they kept on preaching. They said, “The Lord forgives . . .” As I see it, it isn't a matter of forgiveness, it's a matter of righteousness. It is a matter of the Kingdom of God; of a man who is sent from God with spiritual authority; of one who understands because he's speaking out of something that God has worked into his own life.

Once a man begins to touch spiritual authority, he is careful to stop playing all of the religious games we have been discussing. He is supernaturally natural . . . a normal man. He talks in a normal tone of voice. He uses conversational language. He doesn't need to cause vibrations of the tympanic membranes with a high-pitched voice, give flowery and lengthy public prayers or conduct himself in any other abnormal manner.

Consider the ministry of Jesus. He didn't “work up” an anointing. He was a man under the authority of God the Father. He was never in a rush, but never late. He could be angry . . . smile . . . engage in fellowship. Also, he could be devastatingly frank when necessary. It was said of Him that He respected the person of no man. He never did anything to be seen of men, yet He never refrained from anything for fear that He was being “watched.” Nor did He have to go around saying, “I am the Messiah.” Jesus perfectly demonstrated the way to live out the principle that a man isn't known by his title, but by his fruit.

Using 1 Corinthians 3:9, let's explore three realms in which spiritual authority is needed. “For we are God's fellow-workers; you are God's field, God's building” (NAS).

First, let's look at the middle phrase, “*You are God's field.*” This is the area of agriculture. It comes first in the order of necessary preparation for spiritual authority. As a shepherd, or spiritual leader, your first job is to plant, cultivate, hull, nurse, water, feed and bring forth grapes.

Spiritual authority involves digging around in the lives of those who come for help. Rooting out the weeds; fertilizing; pruning. That is spiritual farming talk, and above all else, a farmer must have *patience*.

Once your labor moves from the farming state to the military stage, we come to the phrase, “*God's fellow-workers.*” This is spiritual warfare. When we work with God, we are working against the devil, his principalities and powers. This calls for military decisions.

If one is in command, he needs to understand military strategy. He needs to know how to pick the high ground, choose the right place, outsmart the enemy. In order to assure the victory, God is going to put His men in ranks. He's going to show us how to obey orders . . . how to march and flow in obedience to His desires.

Finally, we come to the third phrase, “*God's building,*” which indicates the third stage — architecture. We all know who is the highest

authority on a construction job — the architect. He is responsible for the plans and specifications, the grades of materials, the standards of workmanship, the passing of the building code. We need men who know how to build, for the rains are coming and the winds of life continue to blow.

Both Jesus and Paul stressed “take heed how you build.” These are not vain words, but sound advice. No more “piles of stones,” but carefully-laid foundations. Families must be built, relationships strengthened. One by one . . . brick to brick . . . the making of a strong building which will stand and cannot be shaken.

As our three analogies show, many areas are involved in the exercise of spiritual authority. In each stage of growth we need spiritual authority to bring forth grapes, to assure military victories and to establish strong bulwarks able to stand the onslaught of the enemy. Only that authority which springs from a life of personal integrity and from a deep sense of love and care will be able to accomplish all that God has intended for His Church in these days.

And we, as the people of God, will experience the security and soundness that comes when true spiritual authority is acknowledged and exercised by all Christians in the way that God had always planned it to be employed — with purity, with power, and with purpose. ♥

### NOTICE TO OUR READERS

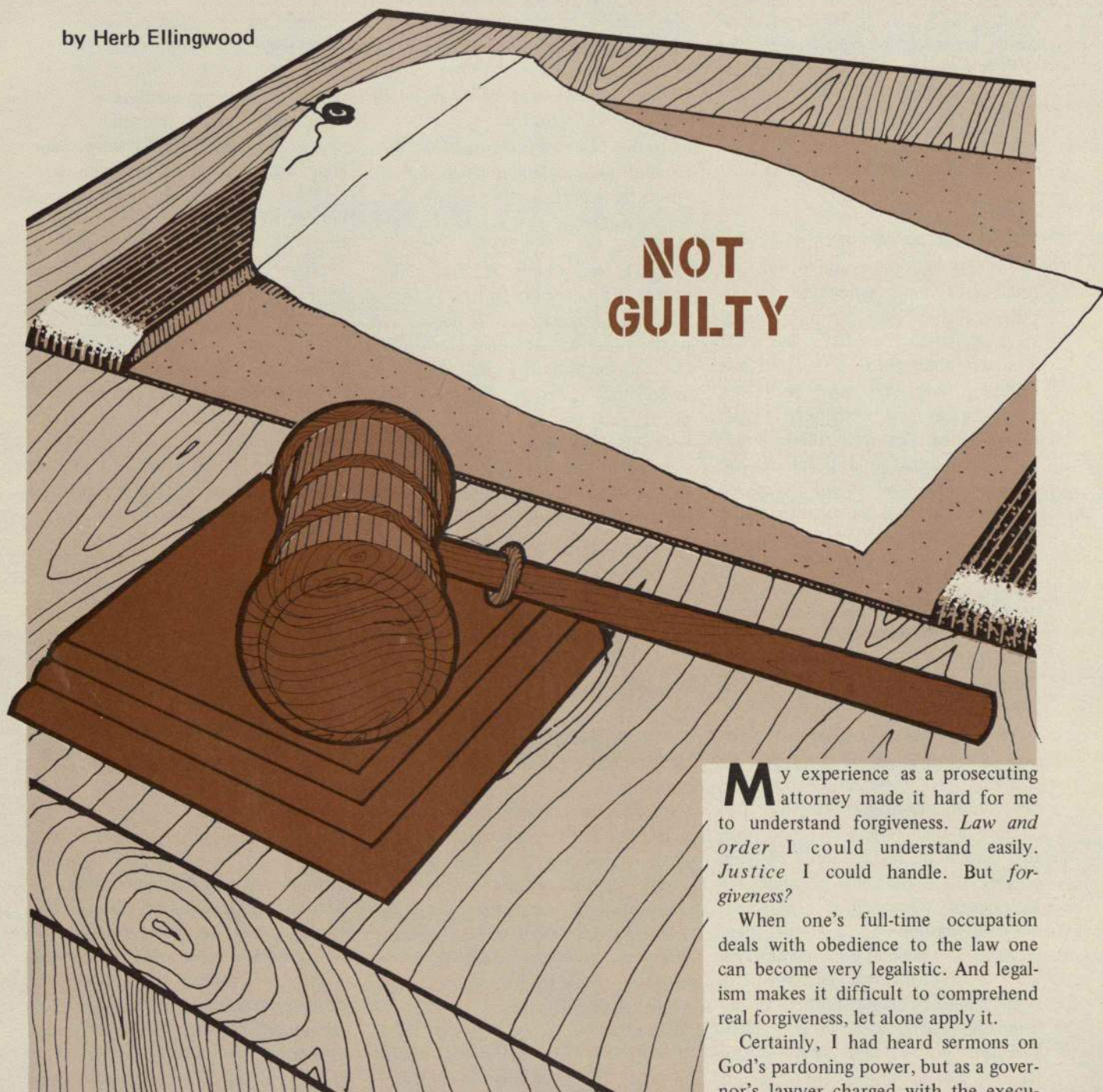
After six years in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, Rev. Bob Mumford is moving his residence to California. His active participation as a director of Christian Growth Ministries, as a contributing editor of *New Wine Magazine* and his ministerial association with Don Basham, Ern Baxter, Derek Prince and Charles Simpson will all continue unchanged. We take this opportunity to extend our blessing and prayerful support to Bob and his family in this new assignment.



# NOT GUILTY

Acquittal: God's brand of forgiveness.

by Herb Ellingwood



**M**y experience as a prosecuting attorney made it hard for me to understand forgiveness. *Law and order* I could understand easily. *Justice* I could handle. But *forgiveness*?

When one's full-time occupation deals with obedience to the law one can become very legalistic. And legalism makes it difficult to comprehend real forgiveness, let alone apply it.

Certainly, I had heard sermons on God's pardoning power, but as a governor's lawyer charged with the execu-



tive clemency portfolio, I knew that in reality a pardon was not forgiveness. A pardon is an official recognition that even though you have broken the law, you have become sufficiently rehabilitated so that for most purposes society will no longer hold that sin against you.

But I felt that God's pardon was supposed to be more than that. It wasn't until I read Romans 3:19-22 in the Living Bible and corroborated it in the Amplified that I began to get excited about forgiveness:

... all the world stands hushed and guilty before Almighty God.

Now do you see it? No one can ever be made right in God's sight by doing what the law commands. For the more we know of God's laws, the clearer it becomes that we aren't obeying them; his laws serve only to make us see that we are sinners.

But now God has shown us a different way to heaven — not by 'being good enough' and trying to keep his laws, but by a new way. . . . Now God says he will accept and acquit us — declare us "not guilty" — if we trust Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this same way, by coming to Christ, no matter who we are or what we have been like.

**ACQUITTAL!** That I understood.

**NOT GUILTY** (even though everyone involved — the victim, the judge, the jury, the defendant and his lawyer — knows you did it)! I can relate to that. It means for everyone in society and for whatever purpose, you did not violate the law — even though you did in fact. The Bible says that is God's brand of forgiveness. He has committed Himself to remember our sin no more (Isaiah 43:25). It's not a limitation on His memory; it's His commitment not to think about it again — for any purpose *ever*. Praise the Lord! There is no better verdict.

I received and continue to receive (pursuant to 1 John 2) that kind of forgiveness from God. Most people who know me would testify that that aspect of God all by itself has done a lot to change me — vertically toward God and horizontally toward man.

Receiving forgiveness and delivering it, though, are not the same thing. Applying forgiveness to others for their sin against us requires a much different effort. My experience is that there exists in Christendom a lack of awareness of the need for horizontal forgiveness. For example, it is obvious that our marriages and families contain many instances of unchristian conduct (sin) against each other which goes unforgiven because forgiveness is not requested. And our souls ulcerate under that mixture of spiritual chemicals. "After all, didn't they sin against me?" "Surely God expects them to be the one to ask for forgiveness." "If they just ask me, I'll excuse them but until they do. . . ."

My Mother was the first recipient of my forgiveness when I saw this principle — but it was over thirty years late. I had hidden my hurt about an unjust punishment received as a child. It had been a shock and a hurt never discussed until the Holy Spirit brought it to my attention about a year ago, and then, my immediate forgiveness of her brought an unexplainable release of peace and joy. Once that happened to me I wanted to spread the good news of its availability everywhere.



*HERB ELLINGWOOD, is a lawyer and political activist, who currently serves as Special Assistant Attorney General in California. For six years he was Legal Affairs Secretary to Governor Ronald Reagan.*

It's true that as Christians we shouldn't have bitterness, resentment, anger, hatred or anxiety. Neither should we be sick. But we do, and we are. Thank God, He has solutions!

Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 11:30 that "many are weak and sickly among you" because of taking communion without forgiveness. James 5:16 sets forth the need for confession of faults (which at times includes forgiveness) before healing. Two great promises often quoted are:

"What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24).

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16).

But both are conditional upon confession or forgiveness, as is the Lord's prayer:

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15).

Those are strong words from Jesus, but perhaps our biggest fault in Christendom now is our lack of forgiveness. This need for forgiveness is inevitable in every marriage — divorced or not; in every family — with one child or ten; and in every job. The Bible doesn't record anyone asking Jesus for forgiveness; but He forgave anyway — unilaterally. And we should do the same, without waiting for anyone to ask us.

It was just this morning that a new element of understanding forgiveness was added for me. Reading in John 1:14 these words stood out: Jesus was "full of *loving* forgiveness." And in verse 17: "Moses gave us only the Law with its rigid demands and merciless justice, while Jesus Christ brought us *loving* forgiveness as well."

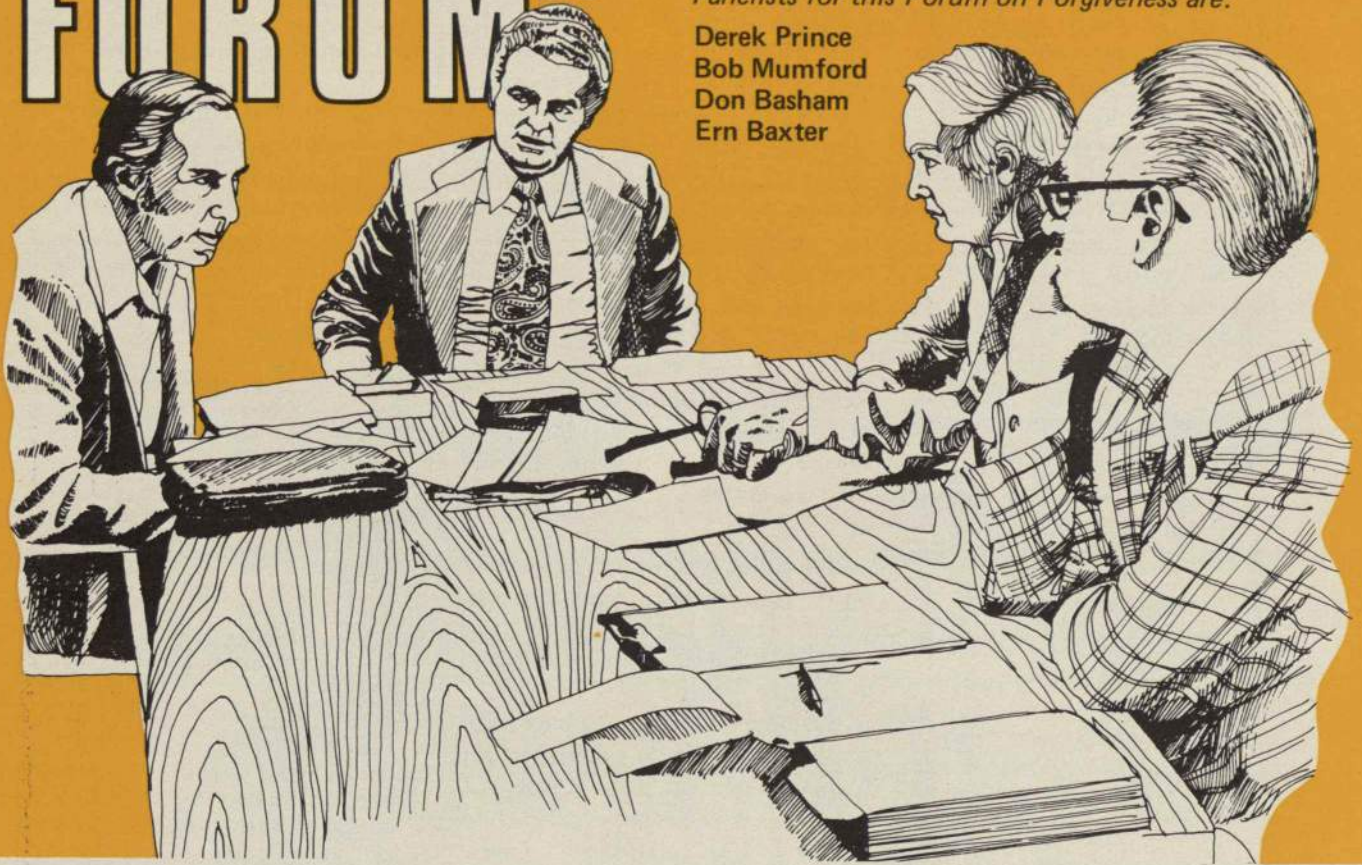
It's possible to forgive legalistically. I was guilty of that. But now I think I'm finally ready to consider this "1 Corinthians 13" kind of forgiveness. I know this — my world is ready and needy to receive it! ☛



# "FORUM"

*Panelists for this Forum on Forgiveness are:*

Derek Prince  
Bob Mumford  
Don Basham  
Ern Baxter



**Matthew 18:15** says, "... if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." Should this be done immediately or should we seek God's timing? Are there times when we should not confront him, but rather take the offense and count it as suffering for Christ's sake?

**BOB:** The concern in this passage is resolving conflict between believers as quickly as time and circumstances will permit. The Holy Spirit's leadership and enablement is vital to the process of reconciliation. If our hearts are set upon the responsibility we have before God to be reconciled with a brother, we can be assured of the earnest help of the Holy Spirit to make that healing possible. The balance here is accepting the responsibility toward God to "make it right," while at the same time recognizing our need of His enablement and leadership to accomplish it.

There are times when one person offends another out of immaturity. It has nothing to do with wrong intentions, but simply a matter of ignorance on their part. In such instances, it is not always necessary to go to the offender. Forbearance is a quality of the Lord's life within us which He gives to exercise towards one another in the face of our imperfections. A guiding rule to use for determining when to confront and when to forbear is choosing the highest good of the other person concerned.

**DEREK:** As Bob stressed, it is always necessary to remember that mere legalistic obedience to the letter of Scripture is never enough. Romans 8:14 lays down a general principle: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." In obeying any exhortation of Scripture — such as this in Matthew 8:15, we should always seek the leading of the Holy Spirit as to how and when we are to do it. Then we should examine our motives. In this instance, appropriate motives would be: the glory of God; the strengthening of Christ's Body; reconciliation with our brother. Also, before we actually confront our brother, we should prayerfully ask God to prepare both our brother's heart and our own (see Proverbs 16:1).

If the offense is an isolated instance, not likely to be repeated, which affects only ourselves and which we are able sincerely to forgive, it may sometimes be better to say no more about it. But if the offense affects the Body as a whole, or if it represents a type of behavior that is likely to be repeated, we probably have no scriptural alternative but to take it up with our brother.

**DON:** Before we take it up with our brother several things should be considered. First, concerning timing, reconciliation is virtually impossible if tempers and emotions are running at fever pitch. Therefore, the person offended should try and get his emotions under control before confronting his offender, otherwise helpful communication



is thwarted. So many times a "cooling off period" is clearly warranted.

A second reason for sometimes delaying confrontation is the need to determine if the "trespass" or "offense" is genuine. We often become offended at things which don't warrant being offended over. For example, I may be "offended" by the way you conduct yourself in a given situation. You may say or do something which I would not have said or done. But the fact that your course of action was *different* doesn't mean it was *wrong*. And if it were merely different, then there is no valid reason for my being offended; therefore, I should try to handle my feelings between God and me alone. The Scriptures make it plain there is a place for "bearing" (1 Cor. 13:7) and "forbearing" (Eph. 4:2) concerning our relationships with one another. However, if the offense is valid and significant, we should waste no time in seeking reconciliation.

**ERN:** Let me add that there is nothing in the text under consideration to suggest "taking the offense." The whole question is one of correcting an unacceptable situation between two members of the Church. The purpose of the required action is to "gain thy brother." Perhaps "taking the offense," while it may appear noble and commendable, could be considered an easier way to handle the situation than to "go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." Coupling this passage with the passage in Matthew 5:23, it seems quite evident that our Lord's concern is not that we either "take" a sin against ourselves, or on the other hand permit ourselves the right to sin against our brother without dealing with it.

It might be added that the matter of "taking the offense" might be more properly considered in the realm of persecution, where a Christian is exhorted to suffer that kind of thing and await the day of judgment for an adjudication of the matter. As I see it, the question of sin between brethren is so important in terms of the unity of the redeemed community, that our Lord makes it very evident that the matter must be dealt with.



The last part of this scripture says, "... if he [the brother] shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." What kind of responses evidence that a person truly has heard you?

**ERN:** The text indicates that a brother has "heard" if he has been "gained," ("won back your brother," Weymouth). The word "gained" is a commercial term which indicates that if a brother remains in his sin there is a serious "loss" involved, while if the brother responds in repentance and reconciliation, then there is a "gain." If the sinning brother repents of what he has done, and is reconciled with the brother against whom he has sinned, then it is obvious that he has "heard."

**DON:** I can think of two immediate evidences that a brother has "heard" our complaint. (1) A sincere apology from a genuinely contrite spirit, and (2) An adjustment in attitudes and actions which will help prevent a reoccurrence of the offense and which results in restored fellowship.

**DEREK:** Elaborating somewhat on the two points Don has made, if our brother has responded positively: (1) he is willing to receive and hear us without anger or self-justification; (2) he frankly expresses his own views about the issue in question; (3) he is willing to confess any fault that can fairly be laid to his charge; (4) thereafter he shows an open and positive attitude toward us; (5) he obviously seeks to avoid committing the same offense again.

**BOB:** Brokenness and contrition are clear responses which give evidence that men's hearts have been restored to one another. When one believer finds the heart of another open to confrontation due to personal offense, he has discovered one of the true riches of the Christian life. The very peace, joy and righteousness of God's Kingdom settle in the atmosphere where believers have truly heard one another.



In bringing about reconciliation where there is long-standing hurt and resentment, are there further steps in the healing process than a mutual "I forgive you" by the parties included? If so, what are some of these steps?



**BOB:** *Speaking forgiveness* is the fundamental basis of beginning. It involves our verbal commitment to release a fellow Christian from indebtedness due to his personal offense. Then, after speaking forgiveness, there is the real challenge to resist speaking further about forgiven offenses and to hold to a position of forgiveness.





**DEREK:** I agree with Bob's comment that speaking forgiveness is only the beginning point, for in the case of long-standing hurt and resentment, a mutual "I forgive you" from each of the two parties is rarely sufficient. One of the greatest barriers to a continuing good relationship is mistrust, which often arises through poor communication. Therefore it is desirable for both parties to maintain regular communication and fellowship with one another. Also, each will probably have to make a definite, continuing effort to cultivate new, positive attitudes and patterns of thought and behavior. Often an impartial, mutually respected third party will need to serve as counselor and arbitrator to avoid, or to settle, recurring misunderstandings.

**DON:** Derek, it might also be brought out that very often there are hidden factors which need to be brought to the light and expressed. In such cases, simply to say, "I forgive you," or "Will you forgive me?" is to "heal the wound lightly." Everything must be brought to the light.

Derek's reference to a change in patterns of thought and behavior is really appropriate, for often a destructive behavior pattern has been a part of the continuing problem. Perhaps a husband has, for years, indulged in criticizing his wife in public. For him to simply go on asking for forgiveness and for her to go on granting it, is not God's highest answer. Total redemption in that situation requires that the husband not only ask forgiveness but seek help in finding ways to change his public behavior toward his wife. And probably *her* attitude will require adjustment as well.

**ERN:** I want to respond to what I perceive as the key word in this question — "long-standing." If the commands of our Lord as contained in Matthew 5:23 and Matthew 18:15–17 were obeyed, there would be no "long-standing hurt and resentment." I believe this is why we have so many unhealthy areas among professing Christians. Long-standing hurt and resentment have festered for years and have

become deep-seated and entrenched in personalities and in interpersonal relationships. It is because of the nature of sin, and our Lord's understanding of our human tendencies to be slow to deal with it, that He urges an immediacy in the matter of dealing with interpersonal wrongs.

There is an immediacy implicit in the text of Matthew 18:15, as it appears that the one sinned against must "go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." There appears to be no time lapse, nor any alternate action possible. The matter must be dealt with immediately. Also when we go to the companion scripture in Matthew 5:23, we again see the divine demand for haste where the brother, in the very act of worship, remembers that his brother in the redeemed community has ought against him. He is urged to stop right in the midst of his act of worship and go and be reconciled to his brother. Then in verse 25 which is related to the whole matter, our Lord says, "Agree with thy adversary quickly."

To put it very bluntly, there should be no "long-standing hurt and resentment" between any of God's people. However, should this be so, then the response of the offender would be the same in kind as in a situation where the matter is dealt with quickly. There would have to be a genuine repentance and reconciliation, and if the case called for it, restitution be made.



**What part does confession play in forgiveness? Is it necessary to confess our sins to someone other than God (shepherd, husband, parents, etc.)?**

**BOB:** Verbal confessions and the declaration of a verbal release to the offender is most important. The injunction of Matthew 18 speaks of our responsibility to "bind and loose." This involves verbal activity. The offender, in seeking forgiveness assumes a place of weakness before his brother. The other brother, in declaring release to the offender assumes a place of vulnerability. Through assuming a place of weakness before one another, believers find the kind of relationships which make way for a larger manifestation of God's Kingdom.

**DEREK:** As Bob stated, when we have sinned, confession is an essential element in true forgiveness and restoration. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Prov. 28:13).

In a special sense, every sin is an affront to God's holiness and a wound to His love. Therefore, every sin needs to be confessed to God. In Psalm 51:4, after committing adultery and murder, David said to the Lord: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight. . . ." Both Bathsheba and Uriah had been harmed by David's sin, but first and foremost it was an affront against God Himself.

Where a sin, such as lying or stealing, has affected



another person, confession — and if appropriate, restitution — should be made to that person. Where a parent has sinned against a child, the parent should confess and ask forgiveness of the child. Where one party to a marriage has broken marriage vows through infidelity, I believe confession should be made to the injured mate. If a sin harms the whole Body of Christ, confession should be made to the whole Body. This applies particularly to persons in leadership.

The extent of confession required has been summed up in the principle: “The *confession* should be as wide as the transgression.” Every person who has been injured by the sin should hear the confession.

**ERN:** The principle Derek has mentioned merits some discussion in view of the failures and violations that have related to the matter of “confession” within the Christian community. In some instances confession has been so widespread as to do almost irreparable damage, while on other occasions adequate confession has not been made so that there is a lingering hurt. I believe it was Dr. Edwin Orr who some years ago stated the principle that “the circle of the sin is the circle of the confession.” I tend to believe that this is an accurate summation of the scriptural teaching on confession.

It is obvious from Matthew 18 that where the sin is confined to two people, confession and adjustment should be made between the two of them alone. The implication is strong here that the matter, having been dealt between the two of them, should then be buried and forgotten and not referred to in any further manner. Sin is like a virus, it is contagious. The danger here is to want to confide in one who is close to you before going to the one who has sinned against you. It would seem that this kind of emotional action should be withstood in favor of an explicit obedience to the Lord’s command.

However, where the sin is committed against the Church, as in the case of the incestuous man in 1 Corinthians 5, then of course the circle of the confession is the Church against which the man has sinned.

**DON:** Sometimes sin is not adequately dealt with in our daily circumstances without the aid of some delegated spiritual authority — a minister, elder, priest, shepherd, husband, or trusted Christian friend. There are times when the necessary discipline and counsel needed to help a person trapped in some pattern of sinful activity must be provided by the loving pressure of a shepherd (or other authority) who, while being forgiving in attitude, firmly insists that the repentance which follows confession be translated into changed behavior.

**DEREK:** Let me add that the person in authority can exercise an additional function besides correction. For in some cases a Christian finds it hard to believe that God has actually forgiven him, or to forgive himself. In such a case it may be necessary for a mature minister to receive that

person’s confession and then to give him authoritative scriptural assurance that God has really forgiven him (see James 5:16).



**Matthew 5:23 says that if while bringing a gift to the altar we remember that a brother has something against us, we should first go and be reconciled to our brother before offering our gift. Does this imply that our service to God is unacceptable as long as we are not reconciled with our brothers?**

**DEREK:** As a general principle, God requires us, so far as it is in our power, to live at all times in a right relationship with our fellow men (see Romans 12:18). Therefore, so long as we tolerate wrong relationships which it is in our power to avoid or to heal, our lives are not fully pleasing to God. Specifically, when we bring our gift to God’s altar, we are asking for His acceptance and approval. Therefore it is at this point that God raises the issue of any wrong relationships and requires us to take the appropriate action, before He sets His seal of approval upon our gift. This is clear in the case of Cain and Abel. It was when they presented their gifts to God, that God bestowed His approval upon Abel and withheld His approval from Cain. This in turn brought out into the open Cain’s wrong attitude toward Abel (see Genesis 4:2–15, Hebrews 11:4).



**ERN:** I believe, as Derek has so clearly stated, that Matthew 5:23 does indeed “imply that our worship to God is unacceptable as long as we are not reconciled with our brothers.” Trying to worship God while at the same time being *at odds* with a brother is a practice as old as time. One sees this thing spoken against over and over again in the Prophets, and also in the New Testament. “Conduct is more important than formal worship. God does not want to receive offerings from Christians who are not at peace with



one another." (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, "Commentary on Matthew," p. 69).

I think there is one point which has to be made here, however, and that is that the brother who has "ought against thee" must have a genuine grievance or "ground of complaint" (Knox). Such is the case of a man who, coming to the place of worship, is convicted in his conscience of a definite act of wrongdoing toward a brother. He must not seek to cover this up by external acts of worship, but rather he must go to the man and settle the matter before he can have a clear conscience in worship before God.

On the other hand, the worshipping brother may be aware of being disliked by one or more persons who do not have a valid ground of complaint against him. This is probably true of everyone to some extent. I believe that one must differentiate between a valid biblical ground of complaint and someone who dislikes you but does not have a valid complaint against you.



**DON:** To emphasize what Ern has brought out, the scripture says, "If we remember that a brother has ought against us." That "if we remember" is important! First, it clearly implies that a brother may have something against us that we're not aware of. Such situations are not uncommon and do not necessarily affect our worship or service to God.

Secondly, that "if we remember" distinguishes between slights and offenses that are valid and need to be corrected and those which are not. Any person ever involved in spiritual controversy has experienced being around people who may "have ought against him" while his position in God makes it impractical or unwise to attempt to placate his accusers.

What's more, the devil has a way of seeing to it that Christians get "offended" over picayune things which have no real substance. I believe it is God's grace which keeps us from "remembering" such things when we "come to offer our gift at the altar," lest we spend practically no time in prayer and worship because we're too preoccupied with

running around placating overly-sensitive brothers and sisters in the Lord.

The fact that all our relationships are not 100% harmonious doesn't mean that our worship is unacceptable to God. I believe Matthew 5:23 refers to *critical*, crucial situations that require prompt attention. And I also believe the Holy Spirit is faithful to alert us to those things in order that we may deal with them.



**Matthew 18:15 places the responsibility for "going" on the one who has been hurt, whereas Matthew 5:23,24 says it is the one who has done the hurting who should go. Is one way better, or does it vary according to the circumstances?**

**DON:** Who does the reconciling — the one hurting or the one who has been hurt? In these contrasting verses I believe God is showing us that *our* doing what is right is not to be predicated on what *others* do. In both cases God is telling *us* to take the initiative. If I have done wrong, I have responsibility to go to my brother and make amends. And if I have been wronged, I likewise have the responsibility to go to my brother and seek to get things worked out.

So many of us are still tempted to follow the easy, undisciplined (and unscriptural!) course of not accepting proper responsibility. We don't want to do the proper thing when we should apologize or ask forgiveness or try to bring reconciliation to a relationship we've fractured. Neither do we want to take the difficult role of confronting a brother or sister in love when he or she has truly offended us.

Put together, these two passages clearly illustrate the responsibility of each of us to assume the ministry of reconciliation in every situation which requires it.

**ERN:** These two passages provide a double protection against any continuing difference between brothers. Ideally, if the one who had sinned, and the one who was sinned against, both obeyed the Lord at the same time, they would meet each other on the road to each other's home, and the reconciliation would be deep and lasting. However, it seldom happens that way, so that either one or the other of the two courses has to be followed.

**BOB:** Fulfilling the law of Christ among brothers means a mutual sense of responsibility to one another. As Don and Ern have both shared, whether one offends or is offended is not the primary concern. The fact of broken relationship and the restoration of that relationship is the main issue. The concern for reconciliation should supercede the concern for who is right or who is wrong. True love in Christ will never be satisfied with just doing what could be called a person's share of the responsibility. It will only be content when wholeness comes to the community of God's redeemed people.



# INSIGHTS

In forgiveness you bear your own anger and wrath at the sin of another, voluntarily accepting responsibility for the hurt he has inflicted on you.

— David Augsburger

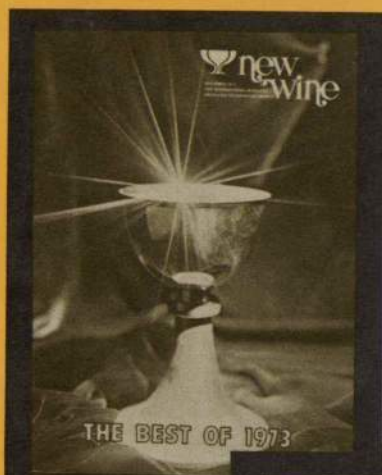
Be not angry that you cannot make others as you wish them to be, since you cannot make yourself as you wish to be.

— Thomas a Kempis

Forgiveness is the fragrance that the flower leaves on the heel of the boot that crushes it.

— Source Unknown

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