

The Decision to Forgive



The Decision is Yours (Part 6)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again at the beginning of a new week, sharing with you Keys to Successful Living which God has placed in my hand through many years of personal experience and Christian ministry.

This week I'll be continuing with the theme which I commenced last week, "The Decision is Yours," a theme that can revolutionize your whole outlook on life.

But first, let me say "Thank you" to those of you who have been writing to me. Before I finish this talk, we'll be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. It means a great deal to me to hear how this radio ministry of mine has been helping you and blessing you, so please take time to write even if it's only a brief personal note. Now, back to our theme, "The Decision is Yours."

In my talks last week, I explained that the soul is the decision-making element in human personality, the ego, that part of us which speaks individually in the first person and says, "I will," or "I will not." That's the part of us that makes decisions. And the decisions we make ultimately determine the whole course of our life. Consequently, it's of the utmost importance for each one of us to make the right decisions and part of that is realizing that we can make the right decisions; realizing and accepting our responsibility to make right decisions with our will.

I gave various examples of decisions that we all need to make, taken mainly from the experience of David. Here are the decisions that I've already spoken about:

1. To bless the Lord

2. To focus our mind on His benefits

3. To praise Him

4. To repent

And I explained that repentance is not an emotion. It's a decision, an inner decision, which is accompanied or followed by outward action. The trouble with many religious people is they're expecting results from their emotions which don't come from the emotions. They come only from the decision; consequently, they are often passive or inactive when they

should be taking the initiative and making decisions.

In my talk today, I'm going to focus on another vitally important decision, the decision to forgive. And I'm sure already that some of you are surprised to hear me call that a decision.

I want to talk first of all about the relationship between forgiving and getting our prayers answered. It's much closer than many people imagine. In Mark 11, verses 24 and 25, Jesus speaks about how to receive the answers to our prayers but He then goes on to warn us about one thing that will block the answer to our prayers. This is what He says:

> ""Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. [Notice, the time to receive the answer to your prayers when you pray'...believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.' The manifestation of what you have received will follow in due course. That's wonderful but now comes the warning.] And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

You see, Jesus warns us there that failure to forgive other people can block the answer to our prayers. Maybe some of you have been praying a long time and saying, "Why doesn't God answer my prayer?" I suggest you need to check whether there's someone you need to forgive. Failure to forgive blocks the answers to our prayers. That's very important to remember.

Then, remember, as I've said already, forgiving is a decision, not an emotion. You don't have to feel forgiving, you have to will to forgive.

And then, another very important point brought out by those words of Jesus, the initiative is with us, not with other people. If you hold anything against anyone, forgive him. Jesus doesn't say, "When he comes up to you and asks to be forgiven, forgive him." But He says, "When you're praying, in fact, before you begin to pray, make sure you've forgiven everyone against whom you have anything."

And then Jesus says at the end, "...so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins." You see, the way we relate to others determines the way that God relates to us. If we have totally forgiven others, we can ask for total forgiveness from God; but if we withhold forgiveness from others, God will withhold forgiveness from us. This is taught so very clearly in the Lord's Prayer, where one of the petitions that Jesus taught us to pray is this: "Forgive us our debts,as we also have forgiven our debtors." Notice, "...have forgiven" is in the perfect tense, it's a settled matter. I don't come to God with my prayers until I'm absolutely clear in my own mind that I have forgiven everybody. And it doesn't suggest that I'm to wait for everybody to realize that they've wronged me and be repentant and come to me and ask for forgiveness that would be wonderful, but that's not the way it usually happens. A lot of people that you have something against don't even realize you've got something against them. They don't think they've done you anything wrong. Whether they're right or wrong, that's not so important. What's important is your attitude toward them. By a decision of your will, you have to forgive them.

Notice again, the relationship between our forgiving others and God forgiving us. Jesus said we are to say to the Father, "Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors." In this same proportion in which we have forgiven others, God will forgive us. If we have totally forgiven others, we can expect total forgiveness from God, but if we withhold forgiveness from others, even in a measure, then we cannot legitimately expect total forgiveness from God. The measure in which we relate to others in this matter of forgiving determines the measure or the proportion in which God relates to us.

You see, it's like this: forgiving is tearing up I.O.U.'s. You have a lot of I.O.U.'s in your hand from somebody who's done you wrong. They're legitimate, they're legal, you can hold on to them. But, God says, "Here up in heaven, I have a lot of I.O.U.'s from you in My hand." And then God says, "Let's make a deal! If you'll tear up those I.O.U.'s that you have in your hand on earth, all of them, I'll tear up the I.O.U.'s that I have from you in heaven. But if you don't tear yours up, I'll hold on to Mine!" So, you have to determine whether you're going to accept that deal or not.

In connection with this principle of forgiving others that God may forgive us, I just want to relate some incidents briefly that I've experienced over the years in counseling with people. One of the commonest situations in which a person needs to forgive is the wife who's been jilted or mistreated or abandoned by her husband. And, unfortunately, over the years, I've had to speak to many such ladies. Of course, it's perfectly possible that it might be a husband who's been abandoned by his wife. But let's just take the picture of the wife who's been mistreated and ultimately abandoned by her husband. So, you sit there and you say, "Well, you need to forgive him." One of the answers I often get is, "I don't feel I can. I just don't feel I can." My answer to that is always simple. "You don't have to feel it. All you have to do is will it. Your feelings are not decisive, your will is." You make the decision, you say it out loud and then you hold on to that

decision. Every time you're tempted to be resentful, you just say to yourself, "I have forgiven him." That's settled.

Then I think of another woman, I was talking to her about forgiving her husband who'd run off with another woman and left her with the children and I said, "You need to forgive him." And she said, "Well, he's ruined fifteen years of my life." And I said, "Well, do you want him to ruin the rest of your life? Because if you do, just go on resenting him."

You see, you've got to bear this in mind: it's not so much the one who is resented that suffers, it's the one who resents. The woman who resents her unfaithful husband suffers much more from that than he does. The only solution is make up your mind to forgive him.

And then I think of a situation in which I was preaching on this principle of forgiving others and I used that illustration of the I.O.U. And I said to a hypothetical case, "Maybe you have a lot of I.O.U.'s in your hand from your husband: I.O.U. Care I.O.U. Affection I.O.U. Maintenance I.O.U. Love I.O.U. Appreciation. And he hasn't paid those I.O.U.'s, he's in your debt." And I said, "Those debts are absolutely legal. You can hold on to them. But remember, up in heaven, God has a lot of I.O.U.'s from you to Him." And I said, "If you will make a deal with God, if you'll tear up your I.O.U.'s from your husband, God says, 'Then I'll tear up My I.O.U.'s in heaven from you to Me.'"

Well, I'd been explaining this very carefully and rather vividly and at the end of my message a very smart looking young woman, probably in her early thirties, walked right up to me, her face was radiant, she looked me right in the face and she said this: "Mr. Prince, I just want to tell you that while you were preaching I got rid of $30,000.00 worth of I.O.U.'s." And she turned around and marched out. I didn't have to counsel her, I didn't have to say a word to her, she had got the message, she had acted on it, and she was the happiest person in that congregation that day.

So, let's apply the lesson. Somebody has hurt you. Somebody's wronged you. You hardly ever can go through life without that happening sometime. You need to bear in mind you may have hurt or wronged somebody else, too. So, you have this I.O.U. What are you going to do with it? Hold on to it?

Jesus gave a parable about an unforgiving servant in which the proportions are something like this: The servant was owed $17.00, he owed $6 million to his master. But he wouldn't forgive the $17.00, so he didn't get forgiven the $6 million. So that's the same proportion with you. Somebody owes you $17.00. Okay, you can hold on, but God's going to hold on to His $6 million of I.O.U.'s up in heaven. What are you going to do about it? My advice is: Make the decision and forgive.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. In my talk tomorrow, I'll be sharing another example of something very important in the Christian life which comes by decision, an example which will probably surprise you.

Radio Program

Transcript: TS-R128-101-ENG
Last Updated: 13 Apr 2023
Website: derekprince.com

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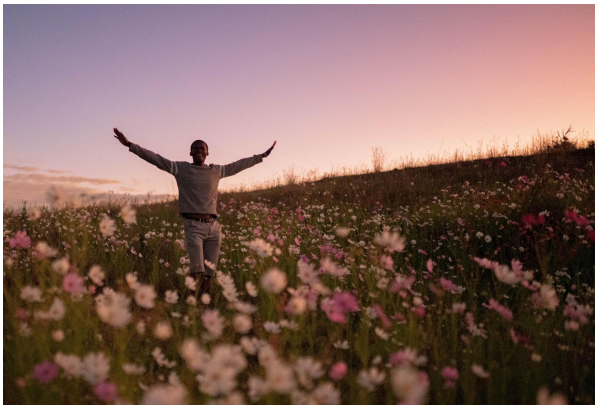

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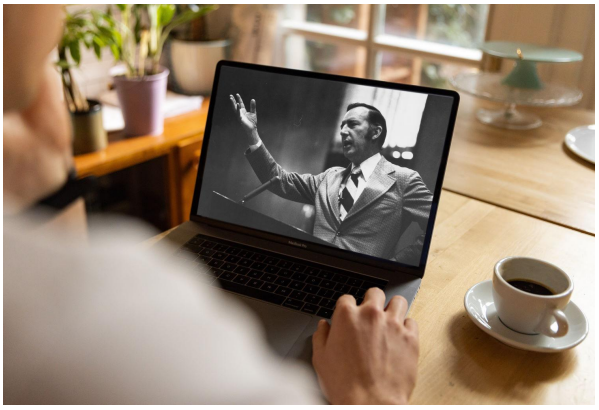

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