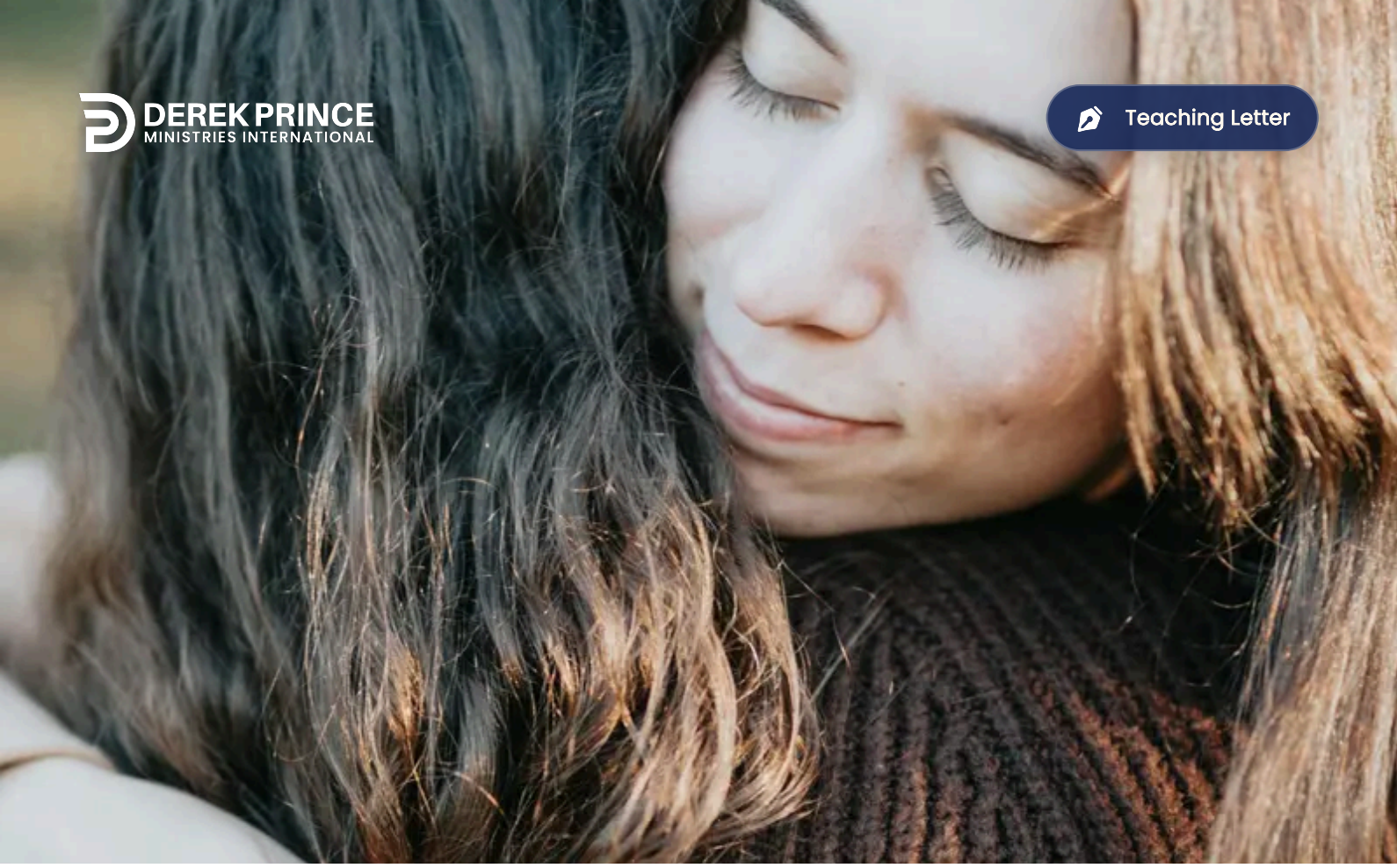

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Teaching Letter

Barriers to Blessing



Teaching Letter
By Derek Prince

Many Christians have barriers in their lives that keep them from experiencing fulfillment, satisfaction, peace, healing, and the multiplied blessings of God. 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, peace, satisfaction, or fulfillment that you ought to and 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.

In Matthew 18:18–19, we have what I call the "powerhouse of the church"—the place of all power and all authority:

> "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven."

I believe that this is the church at the cellular level: 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 agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them." What more do we need than that? All power is contained in the application of that verse.

What I want to point out is that this promise of power is

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encircled and guarded by 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 of that same chapter, just before Jesus gave this promise, He spoke about what to do if your brother offends you:

> "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that "by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector."

Just after the promise of verses 18–20, Jesus went on to give the parable of the unforgiving servant, warning us of the terrible consequences if we fail to forgive another believer. (See verses 23–35.) We see from the placement of these verses that the secret place of power is ringed about with right relationships.

The Unforgiving Servant

Let's take a closer look at this significant parable.

The first servant in the parable owed ten thousand talents or, in up-to-date proportions, about $6 million to his master. Because he was unable to pay, he was about to be cast into prison. He begged for the mercy of his master, who freely forgave him the whole debt. But as he walked out, he found a fellow servant who owed him about $17 (using the same proportion).

"Pay me," the man demanded.
"I can't," the second replied.
"Well, I'm going to put you in prison."
"Wait! I'll get the $17. I'll pay!"
"No," he said, "if you can't pay now, off 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 million? He went right out from your office, met a fellow servant who owed him $17 that he couldn't pay, and so he threw the man into prison."

The Bible says that the master of that servant was very angry. After calling for him and inquiring about what had happened, he said, "You wicked servant!" (verse 32). Then he gave the command and "delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him" (verse 34). The last verse says, "So My heavenly Father also will do to you, if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses" (verse 35). We can see that the last verse of this story plainly indicates that Jesus is referring to professing Christians.

Let me point out to you two plain facts: First, the failure to forgive others is wickedness. The Lord said, "You wicked servant!" Unforgiveness is not merely sin: it is wickedness. Second, the unforgiving servant was delivered to the torturers. And the Lord said, "So My heavenly Father also will do to 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 in the same way that master 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 found multitudes of professing Christians in the hands of the torturers—in spiritual, mental, or physical torment. And I thought to myself, God, how can this be? These are people who call upon the name of Jesus, who profess salvation and acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord. Yet they are in the hands of the tormentor. They are in the hands of evil spirits —they don't have peace or joy, they are subject to fear, their minds are not at rest, and they come to me for deliverance. These are not people outside the church, but inside the church.

The Lord told me, "They are 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 have ever held resentment or unforgiveness. This is God's unvarying condition. There is no way around it.

Prayer and Forgiveness

The Lord's Prayer is a pattern for all believing Christians. Jesus said to His disciples when they asked Him how to pray, "In this manner, therefore, pray" (Matthew 6:9). This is

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a pattern—not that we are necessarily to use the same exact words, but the principles are invariable.

Jesus told us to pray: "Forgive us our debts [or trespasses], as we forgive our debtors [or those who trespass against us]" (verse 12). Now you cannot change that. You are entitled to ask forgiveness from God only 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 further upon: "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 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, Jesus spoke these tremendous words: "For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says" (verse 23). Again, there is no power greater than that; it is all the power we need. Additionally, He says, "Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them" (verse 24). You say, "Wonderful!"

But wait a minute! The next verses say: "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses" (verses 25–26). This is absolutely clear: If you have anything against anyone, forgive. Now "anything against anyone" leaves out nothing and no one.

I want you to notice in Ephesians 1:7 that redemption is coextensive with forgiveness: "In Him [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. 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. If there is unforgiven sin in your life, he knows that 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 even 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 "anything against anyone."

The last petition in The Lord's Prayer is a petition for deliverance. The most accurate translation reads: "Deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:13). But you have no right to pray that prayer until you have prayed, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Once the forgiveness question has been 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.

Feelings vs. the Will

Some people might say, "Brother Prince, I don't feel like I can forgive." I have good news for you—you don't have to feel; you just have to decide. It's not a matter of emotions, but 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 has 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, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20:23). 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 forgiven him, you are still tied to him.

I had the most laughable thing happen once 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 awhile 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! If you moved to a different area, I don't believe 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?"
"I couldn't forgive the bartender!"
"Oh," I said, "that's too bad. If you can't forgive the bartender, then God can't forgive you."

So I told her to sit down and make up her mind as to 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'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 what it must be like to let a bartender ruin everything for you! And yet that is 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 already settled.

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.

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