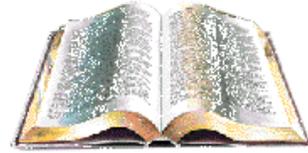


What God Says...



When Sinned Against

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I was prompted to write on this subject because of certain postings on a Facebook church group site regarding how to deal with sexual abuse of children and in particular how to deal with the persons who had committed the sins (crimes) in a church 35 - 40 years ago. However, the subject we cover here is applicable to all situations, both old and new.

There were many opinions posted both by victims and well meaning "experts" and many came out of the "closet" and shared some of the hurts they had experienced and still had. We may think we have great solutions and offer great advice, even the "laws of the land" for good measure. However, God is *the* ultimate authority and provide answers to all issues we face in life through His Word.

As we shall see, according to Scripture to forgive is not an option, if we want to be forgiven. It does not matter if the offending party is saint or sinner. Nor does it matter what the sin is or was. These principles are the same for all sins, but there are definitely different consequences for different sins, so let's pay close attention to what God says.....

How do we deal with people that have sinned against us?

Do we follow what God says or do we deal with it according to how we feel about it?

Do we act like a thermostat or a thermometer?

A thermostat is consistent. It is set at a certain temperature and the heating or cooling system will always work to achieve the set temperature. A thermometer, on the other hand, only reveals the temperature that is present. It has no set level, but it only responds to the current temperature with no regard to whether it is hot or cold.

When someone has sinned against you, in any capacity, are you more prone to react according to the society and culture you live in, the friends you associate with and sometimes even the teachings of your church and the ministers you look up to (the thermometer), or - do you go to the Word of God to see what He has to say about it (the thermostat)?

If you search God's Word for the answer, which is the only solid source, do you take His Word for it or do you listen to the voice or voices that interpret it according to their own opinions and thoughts on the issue. Nothing has changed much since the devil asked Eve; "has God indeed said....?", and gave Eve his own version, which she believed, acted upon and experienced the resulting judgement.

Today, people are still listening to the voice of the devil and concluding that God does not mean exactly what He says, and then they, just like a thermometer, interpret it according to their present situation. There are no absolutes and no anchor to hang onto because our human "wisdom" has taken charge over what God says.

Some will say that we have to obey the laws of the land, and I agree, but only if it falls within the parameter that God has set. There are lots of "laws" that undermine the instructions that God has set forth and unless we revere God above anything man made, we open ourselves open to the devil's suggestions just like Eve. The apostle Peter said:

Acts 5:29: Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

Jesus lays out a pretty simple, but seldom used, procedure to deal with a Christian that have sinned against you;

Matthew 18:15: Moreover if your brother shall sin against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone: if he hears you, you have gained your brother.

16: But if he will not hear you, then take with you 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 you as an heathen man and a publican.

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

Now, that is pretty simple language and easy to understand, but is it really followed today? Do people and churches follow this procedure as given by God?

Before we go any further, let us clarify one important thing - there is a big difference on how we deal with brothers and sisters in the Lord and with the people in the world. God gives us instructions how to behave and judge in the matter of Christian conduct and the ultimate purpose for this is restoration;

I Corinthians 5:9: I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:

*10: Yet **not altogether with the fornicators of this world**, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; **for then must ye needs go out of the world.***

*11: **But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother** be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.*

*12: For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? **do not ye judge them that are within?***

*13: **But them that are without God judgeth.** Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.*

God is very clear in His Word. The scripture in Matt 18 above obviously does not apply to an unsaved person since they have no relationship with the Church. We must Judge rightly when it comes to those inside the kingdom and God judges those on the outside.

Here is another Word from Jesus on dealing with your enemies. This does not talk specifically about christians, but includes all people whether they are christians or not.

Matthew 5:43: You have heard that it has been said, You shall love your neighbour, and hate your enemy.

44: But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

45: That you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

46: For if you love them which love you, what reward have you? do not even the publicans the same?

47: And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more than others? do not even the publicans so?

48: Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Did anybody say it was easy? Not in our own strength, which we seem to rely on first until we get desperate, but by then it may have caused extensive harm already. We cannot deal with this in our own human effort, but only through the nature of Christ which dwells in us - His Holy Spirit.

If the words of Jesus were just commandments that we needed to obey in ourselves it would create hopelessness. However, what he tell us to obey, the nature of Christ in us is well able to perform - if we let Him.

Jesus Clearly showed that in spite of the treatment, of the religious leaders and the Roman soldiers at the Crucifixion, He asked His Father to forgive them;

*Luke 23:34: Then said Jesus, Father, **forgive them**; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.*

The attitude of Stephen was also that of forgiveness when the people stoned him;

*Acts 7:60: And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, **lay not this sin to their charge**. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

FORGIVENESS

When the disciples asked Jesus how to pray, He told them to pray that **the Father would forgive them the same way they forgave others** (Matt 5:12) and in Matt 18:21, Jesus answers Peter when he asked how many times he should forgive someone who sins against him, with a parable of the unforgiving servant and completes it with this statement;

Matthew 18:35: So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if you from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Mark 11:25: And when you stand praying, forgive, if you have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

26: But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses..

Pretty serious stuff and in spite of this Christians will go by their feelings and even to the point of avenge themselves and take people to court and seek what they call "justice", according to the situation they find themselves in.

Jesus did not give a suggestion on how to deal with a sinning brother or sister, He gave a Commandment! It will be clearer as we proceed here.

Here is another scripture that brings out some additional thoughts;

Luke 17:1: Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!

2: It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.

3: Take heed to yourselves: If your brother trespass against you, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.

4: And if he trespass against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to you, saying, I repent; you shall forgive him.

5: And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

These are serious commandments by the Lord, and it's no wonder that the apostles asked Jesus to Increase their faith, because this is hard stuff.

Not only hard to forgive again and again, but some people read into this scripture that we are to forgive only if he repents, although it does not say that. It says that when your brother repents or

if he repents, forgive him. It does not say anything about NOT forgiving if he does not repent.

When studying scripture we must not only look at one verse, but take it all in the context of the entire Word and purposes of God! [Taking scripture out of context is common for those who want to say something that promotes their own agenda rather than the pure Word of God]. As a matter of fact if he does not repent, we are to do the next step in Matt 18 and FOLLOW THROUGH on that God given procedure to deal with sin. However, even at the end of that process, whatever the outcome, we need to forgive for our own sake. But at this point it is easier to do, because now it has been dealt with according to Jesus' commandment and you can be free.

Now, if this process had not been executed, then as time goes, things are covered up and two things happen. The offender has not been confronted about the sin and the victim goes on and experience hurt, anger, bitterness against the offender as well as people around them and possibly against themselves and God as well. Obviously we can see that this is not a good situation for either and it is only because we do not listen to what God says. Years go by and it just gets worse, until sometimes the bubble burst.

Unfortunately, the blame and lack of accountability for a lot of this must be given to pastors and minister of the church who do not teach (the whole counsel of God) on confronting the sinning party according to Jesus's commandment, but rather kept quiet and cover up what should have been confronted and dealt with as Paul addresses in I Cor 5, which we will look at shortly.

CONFRONTATION, REDEMPTION and CONSEQUENCES

God clearly says in His Word that if we do not forgive, we are not forgiven. Does that mean there is no justice? No, of course not, as we will soon see.

The interesting part about all this is God's redemptive plan. "He died for us while we were yet sinners", "God so loved the world that He gave...", before anybody had turned to Him.

The reason for confronting the one that have sinned against us is for a redemptive purpose. God wants everybody, no matter how bad they've been, to repent and turn to him (not willing that any should perish II Pet. 3:9). But He also provides a process that we should follow for there to be holiness in the Church. Sin must be dealt with. It must be confronted. Then we can experience healing and have peace both personally and corporately.

What is the end result of the procedure in Matt 18 if the person does not repent?... We are to treat that person as an unsaved person (a heathen and a publican);

"but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto you as an heathen man and a publican".

Unfortunately, if the leadership of the church do not adhere to this God given procedure it is very hard for an individual to bring this situation to closure if step three is required.

If a person is unrepentant and even if he does repent, there are the laws of the land for certain crimes that will be part of the consequences. When David sinned, although he repented immediately and said that he had sinned against God. He was forgiven, but the consequences for the sin was not removed. Since He was the king, no earthly authority was higher, God was in charge of the consequences, which of course He is ultimately in all cases.

God also tells us that the governing authorities are there to punish evildoers and offer praise to those who do good. This was a message to the church in Rome;

*Romans 13:3: For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Will you then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and you shall have praise of the same:
Romans 13:4: For he is the minister of God to you for good. But if you do that which is evil, be afraid; for he bears not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that does evil.*

A person who truly repents through any stage of the process in Matt 18, if he has committed a crime that falls within the reportable realm of the civil authorities, in the true Spirit of Christ, he will give himself up to face the consequences for his actions. If he does not repent, Romans 13 kicks in and it must be reported to the "minister of God" referred to above.

There is a difference between some criminal acts. Some will need to be dealt with through the civil authority God has put in place and others need not. Crimes like murder, rape, sexual abuse etc. will result in different consequences than for example theft which is also a crime, but can easily be handled "in house" unless the offender does not repent and keeps on stealing. That is why God has given us Matt 18 to run the course of justice - His way! AND, if necessary, the civil authorities to execute punishment (consequences).

Whether someone who is a brother has trespassed and sinned against someone and repented, or someone who is not a brother has done the same wrong, the earthly consequences and punishments are often the same for both. Forgiveness did not diminish the consequences for David.

Are there there situations that warrants that the authorities are brought in? Absolutely, because as we also know, not all people that go to (a local) church are born again Christians. When people commit certain acts of crime it is unlikely they have ever become a new creature in Christ, particularly if there is no repentance and a lifestyle proves otherwise. Will they eventually end up part of the Church of Christ? That is not for us to judge, because God is longsuffering;

II Peter 3:9: The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

However, until such time we are to discern....

Unfortunately we tend to bring all people who attend church under the same umbrella of being Christian bothers and sisters, which is not true, and that sometimes includes people in the ministry. God gives us plenty of warnings about false teachers and prophets:

Matthew 7:15: Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Matthew 24:11: And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

Matthew 24:24: For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Mark 13:22: For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.

Luke 6:26: Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

II Peter 2:1: But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

I John 4:1: Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

II Corinthians 11:13: For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

*14: And no marvel; for **Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.***

15: Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

IMMORALITY MUST BE JUDGED

In 1 Cor. 5, God says that immorality must be judged even to the point of putting a person out of the church and breaking all fellowship;

I Corinthians 5:1: It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

2: And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

3: *For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed,*
4: *In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,*
5: *To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*
6: *Your glorying is not good. Know you not that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?*
7: *Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as you are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:*
8: *Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*
9: *I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:*
10: *Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.*
11: *But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.*
12: *For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?*
13: *But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.*

Wow, "*To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh...*" that's an incredible strong statement, but listen to the rest of what he says and the purpose for this action; "*....that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*". The purpose is to save the person from being lost. The focus is redemption!

Immorality defiles the church unless it is handled according to God's Word. Is it possible that it exists in our churches and that is why we do not see God move as we would want? It has in the past, so what about now?

Do we address it as we should? Do pastors preach on holiness, the power of the blood and sanctification? Or, are we only concerned with (the apparent) comfort? Do we handle things according to Jesus commandments or are things still covered up?

Unfortunately there have been situations in churches where the ministry have wrongfully covered over sinful acts and sometimes the ministry themselves have been involved. A few decades ago a number of men in a church brought forth such knowledge of covering up of sin which resulted in the removal of the senior pastor. The spiritual atmosphere in that church was so bad that well known prophets were confused in their ministry and gave completely wrong "prophetic" words over people.

There are people who have been sinned against and abused both physically, sexually and mentally many years ago and the question comes up...how do we deal with what happened 35-

40 years ago. People are coming forward and sharing how they were abused and there are many opinions on how to deal with this.

Facebook has been used to voice these issues and that media is almost like money, it's amoral, it's just a system that depends on what people put into it. It can be used for good and also bad.

Obviously God does not give guidelines on Facebook use. but He does give explicit instructions to deal with these issues as we have seen in the previous scriptures. Additionally, sowing discord is an abomination to Him:

*Proverbs 6:16: ¶These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, **seven are an abomination unto him:***

17: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

18: An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,

*19: A false witness that speaketh lies, and **he that soweth discord among brethren.***

There has been situations where the accusations have been false, but the damage has been done. People seem to adhere to the adage that "where there is smoke there must be fire" and unfortunately within the churches it seem to be a breeding ground for gossip. God says it's an abomination to Him.

According to a lawyer in Toronto who deals with a lot of sexual abuse cases says that **"once accused of a sex crime most people never recover. All too often people's reputations are destroyed on the top of a press release, with no regard for correcting that once an individual has been acquitted"**.

Do we really have the facts before we start spreading the "news" of who has "done it" and "what they have done", sometimes in great detail. Not that such news should be spread at all. True or not. The media every once in a while carries a story of someone who reported a sexual abuse and later admits it was not true. Sometimes as a result of psychiatric probing that supposedly brought to the surface things that had happened in their childhood. I have personal detailed knowledge of such a case and it devastated the falsely accused person and their family.

Some people have obviously carried this burden for all these years and not dealt with it according to God's way and so they want to go after the person(s) that wronged them 35-40 years ago. Some talk about confronting them on a mass scale, even get the authorities involved and have a class action suit.

Romans 12:19: Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord.

There is big difference between judging righteously and follow God's instructions for discipline and restitution, and vengeance. Taking vengeance is NEVER RIGHT!

We must make sure that our attitude and motivation is according to God's Word, namely both redemptive and for our healing. If you are one who have been robbed and violated and suffered at the hand of someone many years ago and need healing, Isaiah 61 brings out God's healing and restoration of those who are captive, brokenhearted and bound. This is the scripture that Jesus read when He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath day

*Isaiah 61:1: The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;
2: To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;
3: To console unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.
4: And they shall rebuild the old ruins, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations.
5: And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers.
6: But you shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: you shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall you boast yourselves.
7: Instead your shame you shall have double honor; and instead of confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess double: everlasting joy shall be unto them.*

GOD'S WAY

God actually addresses law suits in His Word and when He speaks about not suing, He is talking about situations between Christians, not anyone else and it is important that we understand the difference, as he clearly lays out at the end.

*1 Corinthians 6:1: Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?
2: Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?
3: Know you not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?
4: If then you have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.
5: I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?
6: But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.
7: Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because you go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do you not rather suffer yourselves to be*

defrauded?

8: No, you do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.

9: Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

10: Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

11: And such were some of you: but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

"And such **were** some of you"...What about those who still are (v9,10) but act like they are Christians?

In reference to the old hurts referred to above, there are some questions that would be good to ponder in light of what God says in His Word;

- What will a court case at this late stage accomplish?
- A possible satisfaction that someone will finally get what they deserved?
- The victims will get justice?
- Will the victim then be healed from their hurt because someone sits in jail?
- How will that affect the victims in their relationship with God?
- How has the victim's relationship with God been all these years that they have been feeling anger, hurt, resentment and unforgiveness towards the perpetrator.
- When the sinning party sits in jail, will that be the time to forgive?

Jesus is very clear on how to deal with people who sin against us (see Matt 18:15 above). He says to first go to them (privately) and the important thing to understand is that the purpose is to see if you can win your brother. In other words, to see if he will repent, ask for forgiveness and change. That is the ultimate goal of this process.

Then He says, if that does not work, bring with you one or two more to establish truth, and if he does not hear them, then you take it to the church.

Third step....If he does not hear the church you treat him as an unsaved person (typically back then called a heathen and a tax collector)

Now I hear many say; "yes, but the ministry was involved". Let me insert here that we often have a very narrow view of our church only, rather than seeing the Church of Jesus Christ - His Body. So, if you cannot talk to a minister in your local church, you must take it to someone whom you trust somewhere else (in the Body of Christ). When Jesus talked about The Church it was not only a local congregation, but the Church of Jesus Christ as one Body. The church we attend is a local part of The Church, the Body of Christ, worldwide. There must be accountability outside the local church and we must use it when the situation warrants it. God will provide a way if we follow and are obedient to His Word.

Unfortunately, local churches seem to be very protective and do not easily work together in cases like this. However, God requires accountability within the entire Body. The walls and protection of the Church is not between local churches, but between the Church and the world, between the righteous and the wicked.

Contrary to popular opinion (power in numbers) even inside the churches, in God's economy, there is no greater power in numbers. Whenever God moved He brought it down to a small number so that people could not take the glory for the victory. Remember Gideon's army was brought down from thirty two thousand men to a mere 300, fighting an army that was too great to be even numbered. We think we are so smart to bring a "class action suit" (big numbers), because we feel that WE can get the victory when we are many. Where is faith in God's power in that? Besides, God clearly says to go and tell him his fault between you and him ALONE. Do we know better than God? So, we'll do this in our own strength?

Another great illustration, in the instance with Gideon's 300, was that they were told to bring earthen pitchers (clay pots) with torches inside. When they blew the trumpet, they were to break the pitchers so the light would shine and the enemy would flee. This very simply tells us that we (the clay pots) must be broken vessels so His light can shine forth and put the enemy to flight. Only the Word of God and the Holy spirit can overcome the darkness we encounter. We must not get in the way.

Psalm 33 also specifically points out that deliverance is from the Lord, not in great numbers . It would be beneficial to read the entire Psalm, but for emphasis I have just included a few verses that plainly says that people are not delivered by a multitude of by some human force, but it's the Lord that delivers. If we depend on our own strength we will fail miserably. Sometimes there is an apparent victory in ourselves but we will separate ourselves from the purposes of the Lord;

Psalms 33:11: The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

*16: There is no king saved by the **multitude** of an host: a mighty man is **not delivered by much strength**.*

*18: Behold, **the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him**, upon them that hope in his mercy;*

*19: **To deliver their soul** from death, and to keep them alive in famine.*

I can just hear the arguments, but this and but that.... "This is different". Is it? Or is it that you act like a "Thermometer" and do not rely on the "Thermostat"? Situational ethics? What we feel is right for this particular situation? Sound like the garden conversation between the devil and Eve doesn't it? Has God indeed said?

What is it going to take for us to follow God's directive rather than man's "wisdom" which is foolishness with God? God does not want to share the glory with anyone and unless we submit to Him, we will continue to be miserable.

You absolutely need to deal with your hurt. That is clear and the sooner the better. If you can, approach the offender and follow God's directive (Matt 18). Get help from a brother or sister if necessary, but most of all **forgive as you have been forgiven** and see healing come into your life.

Without forgiving there is no hope of ever being healed on your part. Being resentful and unforgiving will only cause you harm, both emotionally and physically (many diseases are caused by emotional turmoil), but most of all it will separate you from God.

Ephesians 4:31: Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

Hebrews 12:15: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

Mark 11:25: And when you stand praying, forgive, if you have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

26: But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses..

Good health and life comes from applying the wisdom in God's Word;

Proverbs 4:20: My son, attend to my words; incline your ear unto my sayings.

21: Let them not depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart.

22: For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.

23: Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

Jesus says;

Matthew 11:28: Come unto me, all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

29: Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls.

30: For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

GIVING SENSE and UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

There is a well known scripture that has been referred to, confessed to in times of trouble, as well as sung, not so much any more, but we used to;

"....for the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh 8:10)

I would venture to say that not too many people know the context of that portion of scripture.

What caused the joy of the Lord?

Let's go back to the beginning of that chapter and see what happened.....

The people came to Ezra and asked him to read the law of Moses to them. He then brought the book of the law of Moses and all the leaders were with him. When Ezra stood up to read, the other leaders were by his side and people stood with him and he read from morning (when it got light) until midday to the men and the women and those who could understand, and the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law - for possibly six hours? (6-12). Wow! Anything over 30-40 minutes today we get a little itchy.

*Nehemiah 8:3: And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.
4: And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam.
5: And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up:*

Now, as they read the Law, the people responded to it with worship to the Lord.

Nehemiah 8:6: And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

The leaders did not just read, but read **distinctly** from the book and **gave sense** and helped the people **understand** the reading.

*Nehemiah 8:8: So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and **gave the sense**, and **caused them** to understand the reading.*

Nehemiah told the people that this day was holy unto the Lord and not to mourn or weep, because all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law....

Nehemiah 8:9: ¶And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.

Why did they weep? Because now they understood the Word of the Law and they were sorry for their sins and even the sins of their fathers (Neh 9: 2,3).

Then Nehemiah told the people to absorb what they heard and share it with others and the result would be joy....

*Nehemiah 8:10: Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; **for the joy of the LORD is your strength.***

What caused the joy? Understanding, repentance and sharing what they had received!

As a stark contrast we see an earlier time when the people of Israel sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. But it was far from the joy of the lord, because it was based on their own creation, their own ideas and opinions and not on the Word of God that had been given through Moses.

When Moses was up on the mountain to receive the Law of God, we read In Exodus 32 how the people wanted to create and follow their own gods and asked Aaron, the priest, to provide for them gods that shall *"go before us"*. Aaron the priest, instead of restraining the people, got into the act and created a golden calf for them and they said;

"This is your god O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt"

And Aaron built an altar before it and proclaimed; *"Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord?"*

Talk about mixing lies and truth together.....Just like the devil did in the garden.

When Aaron was confronted by Moses later, he blatantly lied and said he *"cast the gold into the fire and this calf came out"*.

A great example and lesson for us of what happens when we substitute God's Word with our own opinions and ideas, what sound good and make sense and what we feel is the right thing to do for a specific circumstance. What serves as your god?

The Lord is the one who delivers. Trying to do it in our own strength will be futile efforts and will fail miserably.

**Godly counsel based on the Word of God
and obedience to the Lord is the only way that works.
Anything else is just man's own creations
and will separate us from God.**