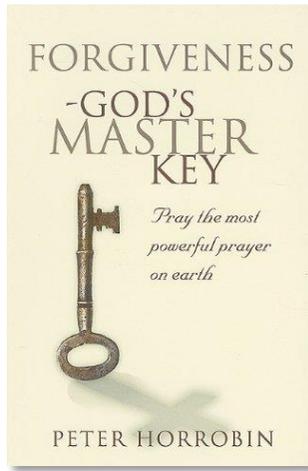


Further reading...

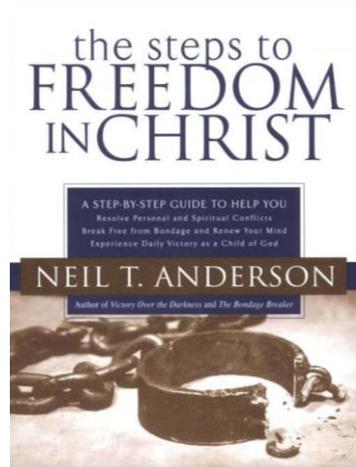


Forgiveness – God's Master Key
by Peter Horrobin

Previously published in 2004 as “The Most Powerful Prayer on Earth” but now re-formatted with a new second part containing testimonies of lives changed by the prayer of forgiveness. This book is one of the most outstanding and concise available on the subject of forgiveness.

Steps To Freedom In Christ
by Neil T. Anderson

If you have received Christ as your personal Saviour, He has set you free. You will still have conflicts in your life, but you can overcome them because of your position in Christ as a child of God. However, for many Christians, life is not always victorious. If you sense that you are not growing as you should, then “Steps to Freedom in Christ” is intended to lead you gently through the process which will allow you to break free from: condemning thoughts; compulsive behaviour; personal conflicts; and spiritual struggle and despair



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Email: info@preachtheword.com

Web: www.preachtheword.com

“Forgiveness: The Key To Deliverance”



by David Legge

“Forgiveness: The Key To Deliverance”

Forgiveness is a very comprehensive subject. I've entitled this booklet 'Forgiveness, The Key To Deliverance', as we take for our text the words of the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 6: *‘After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen’*.

As we come to this subject of forgiveness, and before you read any further, I would like you to pray that the Lord might come and minister to your heart. Ask God to reveal to you, to bring to your mind, anyone you need to forgive. Ask Him that He will uncover the secrets of your heart, maybe even things that you have forgotten about or are not even aware of, subconscious things that He needs to bring to the surface in order that you might deal with them. In the words of the Psalmist, say: *“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me, and know my anxious thoughts; see if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting”*.

Introduction

Many people find themselves in what I would call *‘the prison of unforgiveness’*. I don't know whether you've considered this great subject throughout the Scriptures, but it's a very, very important one, particularly for those who are believers in Christ. There are many laws in God's universe that He has established. There are natural laws and spiritual laws. Now, of course, we know in our own society and culture that there are man-made laws, and you can break man-made laws without consequence. If you break the speed limit and you don't get caught, well, then it's without consequence! However, though you can get away with breaking man-made laws, you cannot get away with breaking God's laws. For instance, in the natural realm, take the law of gravity - *‘what goes up must come down’*. Now you might feel like you would like to fly, or you would like to be like the birds. You might stand on a high-rise building and jump off and flap your make-believe wings, your arms, as hard as you like, but you will not fly, you'll fall flat on the ground! In order to fly, the law of gravity has to be overcome by a stronger law, the law of aerodynamics - and that's why planes take off, a stronger law has overcome the law of gravity. We cannot, just by our own wills, overcome these natural laws - they are unchangeable laws that actually reflect the unchangeable character of the Creator of the universe, our God.

Now continue with this prayer: *‘Lord, I choose not to hold on to my resentment. I thank You for setting me free from the bondage of my bitterness. I let go of my right to seek revenge, and ask You to heal my damaged emotions’*. Now we're just going to pray and ask God to bless the people that you have forgiven: *‘I now I ask You’*, say it with me, *‘to bless’*, you name them, name those people; if it's God you've blamed, bless God; if it's yourself, ask God to bless you; and finally *‘I thank You that You love me, and I choose to accept Your forgiveness in Christ, and the freedom and deliverance that it gives, in Jesus' name, Amen’*.

The audio version of this message, along with over 700 other sermons and Bible Study series are available free-of-charge at



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Will you let Jesus heal you from the inside out? I know that some of you may not have got what I'm talking about here, but I'm sure that the Holy Spirit has brought people to some of your minds whom you need to forgive. I believe He has shone a light on those locked rooms associated with painful memories, and the Lord wants you to face it now. He wants you to take the key and open the door, He wants you to choose forgiveness, He wants you to be freed from your past. Do you want to be free? Do you want to know the full joy of God's forgiveness? Take the key and open the door to Jesus.

Seize the moment

I really feel that there needs to be an opportunity now for you, in this moment, when the Holy Spirit is speaking to you, to forgive people. I'm going to lead you in a prayer. I'm not asking you to pray '*Lord, please help me to forgive*'; I'm not asking you to pray '*Lord, I want to forgive*' - because this is a choice, you have to make this choice and say: '*Lord, I choose to forgive*'.

I want you to pray aloud, and this is the prayer - don't begin just yet, I want to recite it so that you're comfortable with it: '*Lord, I choose to forgive*' - and I want you to put the name there, and you only need to whisper it, whether it's yourself or another - '*Lord, I choose to forgive*', so and so, '*for*', very quietly, no one need hear you, just mouth whatever it is they did to you, or failed to do for you, '*Lord, I choose to forgive - for - which made me feel*', and verbally tell the Lord every pain and hurt that the Holy Spirit has brought to your mind. The Lord wants to minister to you.

If your resentment is toward God, I'll lead you in a prayer for that, but I want you to pray this now, filling in the gaps very quietly where you are: '*Lord, I choose to forgive*' - and you say that name, take it on your lips very silently - say '*for*', and you tell the Lord, speak it out very silently, but speak it out, '*which made me feel*', now let the Holy Spirit bring those emotions to the surface, you must not suppress them.

Now maybe there is someone who has had resentment toward God. Pray this: '*Lord, I am sorry for blaming You for*', and tell Him what you have blamed Him for, take it on your lips, speak it out, the bad things that have happened in your life that you have attributed to God. Now say this after me: '*I know You don't want to harm me, please forgive me*'.

Not only are there are natural laws, but there are spiritual laws. Very, very generally: bad choices that we make in our lives bring a curse and a negative consequence. Equally: good choices that we make bring positive consequences - we would call them 'blessings'. Bad choices equal curses, good choices equal blessing. When we trespass against God, when we break His laws and divine principles, it affects us. It affects our relationship with God, and indeed it affects our relationship with one another. Now one of these divine laws of blessing is this: '*forgive, and you yourself will know forgiveness*'. It's very clear within the Scriptures: forgive, and you will experience God's forgiveness.

We read it in the Lord's prayer, verse 12 of Matthew 6: '*Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*'. We have prayed it many times, yet do we really enter into the depth of what this actually means? Now of course, the disciples, who were hearing this prayer for the first time, they wanted their sins to be forgiven - who wouldn't? But it appears that they struggled with this concept, that if their sins were to be forgiven, personally, they had to offer forgiveness to those who had offended them and trespassed against them. They struggled with this idea of forgiving others. We see this, because the Lord had to reiterate this principle a little bit further down, if you look at verse 15 of Matthew 6: '*But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses*'. He wants to make sure that they get this, it's vitally important if you want to have fellowship with your Heavenly Father, with nothing in between. If you want to keep the communication gates open, you have got to forgive others if you want to be forgiven by God!

Now later on, in chapter 18 of Matthew, we see that this is still persisting as a problem in the consciousness of the disciples. Peter is the one who asks there: '*Lord, how often do I need to forgive my brother when he offends me?*'. Peter thought that he was being overgenerous by offering the suggestion of the figure of 7: '*Is it all right to forgive seven times?*'. You remember the retort that came back from the Lord: '*Peter, I say to you: you've got to forgive seventy times seven*' - 490 times! Now, does it mean that at 491 you're able to smack them? Of course it doesn't! '*Seventy times seven*' is actually a euphemism for '*Look, you've got to keep on forgiving! There is no limit, Peter, to your forgiveness*'. In other words, '*Peter, stop counting, and just keep on forgiving!*'. That's staggering!

The consequences of unforgiveness

So this divine law of blessing - one of these laws that says: *'If you do this, you will know good and be blessed'* - enshrines this principle: *to have the continuous blessing of God, then you must continuously forgive others*. Otherwise, when you ask God to forgive you, you'll actually be asking God for something that you're not prepared to give to others. Do you know what that makes you? A hypocrite! When we do that, we actually trap ourselves in our own hypocrisy, we want God just to cover over all our iniquity, but we're not prepared to reach out and forgive others. There are grave spiritual and personal consequences for this type of unforgiveness.

In Matthew 18, when the Lord answers Peter's question, *'How often do you forgive your brother?'*, He told a parable. You can turn to it in your Bible if you wish. The parable was of a servant who was forgiven a huge debt of millions of pounds, in our currency, by the King. However, this servant who had been forgiven refused to write off a tiny debt of a few pounds from his neighbour. The King got wind of this, and threw the servant into prison and told him: *'You will stay in prison until you repay that amount to the last penny'*. Now the Lord Jesus' commentary on that incident was this: *'His master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses'*.

So the Lord was warning: *if unforgiveness is in your heart, you will never know true freedom*. Effectively you will be thrown into a prison, into a dungeon, a cell of your own unforgiveness. The Lord says, you will be tortured, the torturers will come to you. Now, I don't know exactly what that means, but I do know this: people who have unforgiveness in their hearts are tortured by their bitterness. It gives a foothold, a stronghold even, to demonic powers torturing them because of the seed of unforgiveness in their soul. You can see how serious this is. Unforgiveness imprisons you, it tortures you.

The consequences of unforgiveness do not relate only to conscious unforgiveness. (What I mean by that is, something that you're constantly aware of, something that is on your mind now, that has been an offence of another toward you, and it's at the forefront of your mentality). Unforgiveness may be something that you're unconscious of, something that has been forgotten or buried in the annals of time, something that has been suppressed by you - some trauma in your history that has been deeply hidden and buried, and you're unaware of it presently. Perhaps you

Now what I want you to do is, if you have a list of people, or just one or two that you need to forgive, if you have memories that you need to let go of and allow the pain to surface for God to heal, you need to ignore your emotions. Your emotions will prevent you doing it. Your emotions will say to you: *'You're going to lose it, you're going to be blurting out full of tears, the anguish and the pain will be too much, and you'll just want to run away, and you'll not want to deal with it'* - that's what your emotions will say, and they will keep you imprisoned; but what you need to do is exercise your will!

True forgiveness is from the heart

Now, that said, a fifth thing that I need to share with you about forgiveness is: *forgiveness must come from the heart*. You say, *'Well, is that not a bit of a contradiction in terms?'*. No, I'm not talking necessarily about emotions now, I'm talking about genuineness, sincerity. You may not feel like forgiving, but when you choose to forgive - and I believe some of you are going to make this choice - what will happen is: the emotions will rise to the surface, and you must not suppress those emotions! Too many of us want to bury them, we're afraid of losing control, some men in particular are afraid of being emotional - but if forgiveness is going to be genuine, and supernatural, it has to touch the core of our heart. We have to allow God to bring the painful emotions and memories to the surface, and we have to acknowledge how we feel towards another, or towards ourselves, or towards God - we have to face it, but we face it with God! Nevertheless, we must face it from the heart, because unless we face it from the heart, God cannot heal our broken heart.

You know that you have doors locked, behind which there is a mess of memories and mistakes and pain. You know God is calling you to take this master key of forgiveness and, with the Lord Jesus, put the key in the door and go into the room. I'm telling you this: if you choose this path of forgiveness, the inner healing that will transpire from that encounter will bring healing to all of your life. I'm not saying all your problems will disappear, but people have even known physical healing, actual physical healing, because of forgiveness in their life. You don't have to be a preacher to know that most people today who are going into doctors' surgeries, their complaints are caused by problems of the mind and the heart. I'm not saying they aren't ill, they are ill - but their physical symptoms, and even disease and all sorts of physical problems and ailments, tangible things, can so easily come because of brokenness that is in the human spirit.

Of course you won't feel like forgiving that person, but the fourth thing is this: *forgiveness cannot wait until you feel like it, it is a choice and a decision of your will*. You see, you must choose not to hold someone's sin against them anymore. If you wait until you feel like it you'll never do it! You must use the will that God has given to you, you must choose to forgive.

How forgiveness works

Let me be absolutely clear and explain to you how this actually works in the spiritual realm. Once you choose to forgive someone, whether it's yourself, another, or it's blame that you're attributing to God; once you choose to let go of that and declare it (and I believe it needs to be declared verbally), Satan loses his power over you in that area. This is why it needs to be declared verbally, because Satan can't read your mind. If you say something in your mind, he is not obliged to react, he can't even hear it, let alone heed it. But once you choose to take a person off your hook, and put them onto God's, and relinquish any right of your own to have justice, to have your hour in court, to have your pound of flesh, Satan has to take note! Satan is a legalist, he has to backtrack from the area of your life that you previously had allowed him to encamp on through your bitterness and unforgiveness. When that happens, God can then come into that previously locked room and start healing your damaged emotions. Feelings will come later, they will - but not until you choose with the will to forgive.

Some of you have heard of Corrie Ten Boom, author of *'The Hiding Place'*, the film and the book. She and her family are well known because of their work preserving over 800 Jews who were pursued by the Nazis in World War II. Because of their involvement in that work, four of Corrie Ten Boom's family gave their lives. If you know the story, Corrie's sister, Betty, died just before the end of the war in Ravensbruck death camp - tragedy, a litany of tragedy. Yet the whole story hinges on the spiritual experience that Corrie had in Ravensbruck, and some of the things that she learned there through wrestling with these emotions of bitterness and unforgiveness. Here's one of them: *'There is no pit so deep that God's love is not deeper still'*. Another: *'God will give us the love to be able to forgive our enemies'*. Here's another statement that she made in relation to forgiving people by choice, listen to what she says: *'Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart'*. Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart.

are oblivious to how it has affected you, and how it has imprisoned you and is torturing you even in your subconscious.

Peter Horrobin wrote a book: *'Forgiveness, God's Master Key'*, and in it he uses a wonderful analogy that I want to share with you. He says that our lives are like buildings with many rooms in them, and each room in the building contains memories of important events in our lives. He says some doors are wide open all the time, and those are the rooms of the memories that we happily enjoy - we're quite freely going in and out of them, and remembering them, and they bring great comfort to us. But some of the other rooms are not wide open, they are closed, and they are locked - because behind those doors there is pain associated with bad memories. Rooms named *'trauma'*, *'rejection'*, *'betrayal'*, *'abuse'*, *'disloyalty'*, *'divorce'*, *'accidents'*, *'mistakes'* - and because we don't know how to resolve those painful memories, we shut the door on them and we lock it. The problem is, as the years go by it gets harder and harder to cover up the hurt behind those doors. Some people have so many locked doors in their house that they have very little living space any longer - maybe that's you? You're being squeezed by the closed doors, and often what happens is: the mess that is inside those rooms start to seep out, sometimes under the locked doors. You might try to cover up and carry on as if nothing is happening, but everyone can see the mess seeping from below the door. Perhaps you know that the only way that this mess can be cleared up is to open the door, and to go inside and clean it up from the inside out. The problem is: you have shut the door so tight, locked it, and effectively thrown away the key for fear that you should ever have to face what is behind that door.

Peter Horrobin is right when he says: *'Jesus has given a master key for that door, the master key is the key of forgiveness. He has put it into our hands and He wants us to use it, and then when we open the door through forgiveness, He will come with us into that room and help us clean up the mess'*. The Apostle Paul says we need to clean up the mess. In 2 Corinthians 2:10-11 he says that if we don't clean up the mess, Satan will have an advantage over us. He says: *'I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ'*. There was an offender in the church at Corinth, and Paul says: *'I have forgiven him, because you have forgiven him, lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices'*. If we do not forgive, Satan gets a foothold in our lives that very quickly becomes a stronghold, and even a stranglehold on our spiritual lives.

Making a list

Perhaps you need to come to God with your locked room? You need to allow the Lord Jesus in, you need to use the key of forgiveness, you need to ask - if you have not already prayed - *'Lord, bring to my mind people whom I need to forgive'*. I'm not exaggerating here, this is a spiritual exercise. You may need to take a pen, right now, and a bit of paper, and you need to write a list of names that the Holy Spirit brings to your consciousness. I'm serious, do this: write the names that God brings before you, if He brings any. Even if the name seems to be strange - and you think, *'Well, I've nothing to forgive them for'* - if the Holy Spirit brings a name to your mind, write it down, or hold onto it in your consciousness, because you're going to need that name. You need to trust God, not lean on your own understanding, but acknowledge Him in all your ways to direct your paths in this matter of forgiveness. Realise that there might be something in your subconsciousness that you have forgotten, that you have to forgive them for. You must trust the Holy Spirit to lead you in that regard, so that you might use the master key of forgiveness on each of those names, so that you might unlock the door to the prison of unforgiveness.

I was once ministering to someone who needed to forgive a lot of people - they had a very, very long list. As we began to pray through the list, and use this key of forgiveness on the offenses that these people had committed toward them, they couldn't! They couldn't get the name of the first person on the list out of their mouth. The words that this person spoke to me were these: *'How can I forgive these people when I don't forgive myself?'*. Right away the Holy Spirit was pointing to the fact that this person couldn't go down the list of other people who had offended them, because they had not forgiven themselves, they had not partaken of the great, vast riches of God's forgiveness that He offered toward them. So there was a real struggle with the issue of forgiveness, they personally hadn't received it - I'm not saying they weren't saved, but they had got into a spiritual cul-de-sac where they could not forgive themselves, and so they couldn't offer forgiveness to others.

I wonder is that like you? You're in a prison of your own unforgiveness. Maybe you have a problem forgiving other people, but the root of that is: perhaps you have not entered into the full liberty and enjoyment of God's forgiveness of you - you can't forgive yourself! Maybe you're punishing yourself for wrong choices that you've made in the past. Maybe it's guilt and shame because of what another

That is the way that we have to relate and react to people who offend us. We can't dispense our justice, even the laws of our land which God has ordained get it wrong from time to time - but the way that we deal with these offences in our lives, when we have to live with the consequences of another person's sin, is what Romans 12 and verse 19 says. Listen to it in this translation: *'Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but leave room for God's wrath; for it is written, 'It is Mine to avenge, I will repay', says the Lord'*. Do not repay evil for evil, but leave room for God!

Maybe you're saying: *'But you don't know what they have done'*. You're right, I don't know what they have done - but Jesus knows. Listen to what 1 Peter 2:23-24 says about how our Lord dealt with the bitterness, the anger, the malice, the hatred that was toward Him: *'Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten'*, here's how He coped, here's what He did, *'but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness; by whose stripes you were healed'*. How did He deal with it? He offered up all the wrongs that were done to Him to the righteous Judge of heaven, and He made room for God's wrath, not His own.

Our society is obsessed with their rights, human rights, the rights to walk down this road, that road, and the other road - that's not meant to be the Christian mantra: *'My rights!'*. Forgiveness means living with some of the consequences of other people's sins, it means not forgetting.

Thirdly: *forgiveness is choosing not to hold someone's sin against them anymore*. It's not forgetting it, it's not living in denial or trying to bury it, it's facing it! It's not even concluding: *'That doesn't touch me, and I'm not going to let it touch me or affect me'* - it does, and you have to absorb some of the pain - but it's choosing not to hold that sin against that person anymore. This is what you're doing, revealing what our Lord did on the cross: it is to let people off your hook, and hang them on to God's hook, the Judge of all the Earth, shall He not do right?

Are you seeing this in your mind's eye? It is to forego the right, your right, because you were the offended one, your right to get your pound of flesh. It's foregoing that right, and taking them off your hook and hanging them on to God's hook. Listen: it is a choice not to hold their sins against them. You see, one of the biggest obstacles to forgiveness is: *'I don't feel like forgiving them!'*. You won't, but what you have to realise is that feelings have very little to do with it.

forget the past, when what that actually does is exacerbates the pain of the past! What God wants us to do is face the past, and face it with Him! Then He will restore to us the years that the locusts have eaten.

Perhaps some of you have very painful pasts, but your way of dealing with it has been to try and suppress it and bury it, and you know it's not working. You know it's causing all sorts of extra problems in your life. Well, listen: forgiving is not forgetting, it is not.

Secondly: *forgiveness is living with the consequences of another person's sin*. You might have this idea that, if you forgive, well then *'Whoopee-do!'*, everything is rosy in the garden - no. If you're going to truly forgive, you have to actually live with the consequences of other people's sins. Now please don't misunderstand what I'm saying: I'm not saying you ought to carelessly put your life or another person's life in danger. No one should tolerate sin or abuse of any shape or form. I'm not talking about putting up with that - but, whether we like it or not, we do have to live with the consequences of what people have done to us. We can't control other people, can we? We can't control how they relate and how they react towards us, the only choice you have is whether you will stay in the bondage of bitterness towards their behaviour, or whether you will emancipate yourself with the key of forgiveness into freedom. That is the choice you have.

Forgiveness is living with the consequences of another person's sin. No one genuinely forgives without bearing suffering and pain from the other person's sin, that's a reality. If you're going to forgive, you're going to have to take something on the chin. You're going to have to absorb some of the pain. You say, *'Well, where are you getting all this from?'* *'Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned He stood'* - that's the cross. That's what the cross is. Listen, this is a myth of political religion, that people have to be repentant before you forgive them - that is rubbish. Listen to our Lord Jesus: *'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing'*. They had put the nails into His hands and His feet, and what does He do? He forgives them.

You say: *'Where is the justice there? Living with the consequences of another person's sin? Where is the justice there?'* Well, let me tell you where the justice is: the justice is with God, and it's not with us. Let's be honest: who of us here would be worthy and able to dispense completely righteous and pure justice to anyone? None of us!

person has inflicted upon you, and you feel that secondary guilt, and you blame yourself. Maybe you say: *'I don't deserve God's forgiveness'*. I sat with someone not so long ago, a professing evangelical believer, I was trying to get them to see the love of Jesus for them - and they said these words: *'I know that Jesus died for everybody, but I've got a real problem accepting that He would die for me'*.

Do you think you don't deserve God's forgiveness? You're right! You don't! None of us do! Perhaps your problem is that you can't actually forgive yourself. By saying *'forgive yourself'*, understand, of course, that we can't forgive ourselves, only God forgives anyone. When I say *'we don't forgive ourselves'*, it's the idea that we can't accept the truth that God has already forgiven us in Christ! We are forgiven, we are justified, because of what Jesus did in shedding His blood on the cross, it is just as if we had never sinned - but because we can't accept that, and receive it, and believe it with our hearts, we're not enjoying forgiveness! We're still holding ourselves guilty. Maybe at the top of your list you need to write: *'Myself'*. Do you?

Another person who probably isn't on your list right now is God. *'God? How can I forgive God?'* Well, it's not that we forgive God, because God is blameless, He doesn't do anything requiring forgiveness - but often within our hearts we have resentment toward God. We hold things against Him, we maybe have feelings of anger, and we're terrified because we never want to express it - but it is deep down in our hearts. We try to suppress it and bury it, but it bubbles over from time to time. Maybe you have bitterness against God, and it has built a wall between you and your Heavenly Father - you blame God. You wouldn't speak it out, you wouldn't shake your fist or point the finger at Him, but you hold Him responsible for some tragedy or some disappointment in your life.

Often, when we do that, we are not accounting for the gift of free will that God has given us to make choices - wrong ones - which can bring a curse in our life. Neither do we account for the fact that everybody else has been given free will as well, and that means they have the liberty to choose to hurt us. That's the universe God has created, and I hope you wouldn't want God to take your free will away from you? Of course you wouldn't. One of the great consequences of this free will is that we can hurt people, we can make mistakes, and others can abuse us. We blame God so often for things that He is not guilty of - but maybe you need to put on the list *'thoughts against God'*, *'resentment against God'*, *'anger against God'*? If you're to know deliverance, and you're to know the full blessing of

the Gospel of Christ, you're going to have to let these things go. 'Oh', you say, 'it's easier said than done!' - I know it's easier said than done, but it must be done.

Then you may have a list of other people on your piece of paper, and I have to tell you: I would be very surprised if your parents or other guardians in your life aren't very high on that list. All of us are the fruit of our ancestors, aren't we? Of course, in our development, our parents are the most important people in our lives because they have influenced us in our formative years, in our adolescence - and do remember that their parents influenced them, which also influenced us. You can go back as far as you like - but we know this: the choices of our parents affected us in good and bad ways. Now don't misunderstand what I'm saying: some of us have had good parents, and we would do well to thank God for the good parents that we have had; but many of us have had bad parents. One thing is absolutely sure: none of us have had perfect parents. So, no matter how much our parents have loved us and attempted to keep above us the umbrella of protection from we are little babes through to toddlers and then infants and adolescents, there are always times when there are holes in the umbrella, and things come through. The protection that ought to have been there is not there - all of us have experienced it, no matter how brilliant our parents have been. Often it is at those times that the enemy gets in. Many of you need to thank God for the parents that you've had, but some of you need to forgive your parents and other members of your family - maybe grandparents - for anything that was ever said or done that had a negative impact on your life.

Maybe it's not parents, maybe it's a spouse, a husband or a wife. Maybe it's your children, things that they have said or done to you. Maybe it's a very close friend who has betrayed you, who has let you down. I don't know, but on that list there are people who have made negative impacts on your life. They may not have intended it (don't misunderstand what I'm saying here: we're not being down on parents), but this is life, this is life as we know it on planet earth.

Forgiving the 'unforgiveable'

Now I don't know who is on your list, how many, but maybe your natural reaction to some of the names is: 'They don't deserve my forgiveness'. Is that the way you feel? Or perhaps you're saying: 'Well, that's all well and good, if this was something that happened once I could forgive them, but they are persisting in this offensive behaviour toward me'? Maybe you're saying: 'It's too late, this person is dead, how can I

forgive them?'. Please note carefully what I'm about to say, because it's one of the most important statements you might ever hear: *you're not forgiving these people primarily for their sake, but for yours!* You need to forgive them in order to be free! You must understand that until you forgive, until you take this master key of forgiveness and put it into the lock of that door - behind which are all these mistakes and pains and heartaches and tragedies - those memories will still have a hold on you. If they still have a hold on you, then the abuser, in effect, is still abusing you!

You're still hooked to that memory, you're chained to your past until you forgive. They don't deserve it, no one deserves forgiveness, but this isn't about justice. They might persist in their behaviour - what did Jesus say to Peter? '*Peter, don't count the times that you forgive, just keep on forgiving*'. I know this is hard stuff, and maybe the difficulty you have in taking this in is because of misconceptions that you have about forgiveness - and many people do have vast misconceptions about what we're actually being asked to do by the Lord when He says: '*Forgive*'. I'm going to give you four things that give us a true biblical understanding of what forgiveness is, and I really want you to lay hold on these to help you use this master key to deliverance. Some of these points have been made by Neil Anderson in his book '*Steps To Freedom In Christ*', which is one I would highly recommend to you.

Four steps to forgiveness

Here's the first thing: *forgiveness doesn't mean forgetting*. You've heard the saying '*Forgive and forget*', well that is rubbish! You cannot forget. I'll tell you better than that: even God can't change our past. You say: '*That's a shocking statement!*' - but it's a true statement. The way God has ordered this universe, it would transgress His own principles and character to press the '*rewind*' button, go back in time, and change an actual historic fact and occurrence that happened. Has that ever occurred? No, it doesn't happen, God doesn't do it. So you need to come to terms with this fact. Maybe this doesn't sound very comforting at this moment, but you've got to understand that this is one painful, natural reality that you have to face if you're ever going to be free and healed from a painful past. You're going to have to face the fact that the past cannot be changed, and you might never forget the things that have been done to you. However, though God cannot change the past, God is in the business of healing the past and redeeming the past! Many of our greatest problems come from our attempts to bury the past and trying to