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## Avoid The Snare Of Unforgiveness

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In continuing with the "contending for destiny" series, we are learning there are hindrances to reaching our destiny and one of the biggest things is unforgiveness, the result of hanging on to offense. We all have personal destinies or dreams and desires, for ourselves and our families and the church of which we are a part of, also has a destiny. There are some people who will never reach their destiny, an example is the children of Israel who never reached theirs, they died on their journey to the promised land. However, there were those that became men and women of faith reaching their destiny and as believers we can reach ours also. Gods plan is that we fulfill our destiny, but we must let go of offenses and have forgiveness to those who have offended.

2 Cor 2:9-11 "For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. 10 To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ; 11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices." KJV

The epistles teach us how to let go of offenses usually brought on by unforgiveness, bitterness and malice, by being willing to forgive. Paul mentioned different people who harassed him and how he dealt with them in forgiving their offenses. However, in most local churches, the people are ignorant to the devices of Satan, they will keep talking about what has happened and not forgive. Unforgiveness hinders the flow of God and hinders the word of God being preached and keeps people from growing up and going forward.

In 1st Timothy we read that he had a large church and was successful, but in 2nd Timothy we learn that he was being challenged by the people there and Paul is admonishing him to be strong in his faith and stir up the gift that is in him. The entire book of 2nd Timothy is sound instruction to all believers and help them.

2 Tim 2:23-26 "But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. 24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, 25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; 26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" KJV

v. 26 the devil has taken them captive and is forcing them to do his will - "taken captive" means to take an animal alive and put in a cage behind bars.

2 Tim 2:26 "Run away from infantile indulgence. Run after mature righteousness—faith, love, peace—joining those who are in honest and serious prayer before God. Refuse to get involved in inane discussions; they always end up in fights. God's servant must not be argumentative, but a gentle listener and a teacher who keeps cool, working firmly but patiently with those who refuse to obey. You never know how or when God might sober them up with a change of heart and a turning to the truth, enabling them to escape the Devil's trap, where they are caught and held captive, forced to run his errands." MESSAGE

2 Tim 2:26 "Then they will come to their senses and escape from the devil's trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants." NLT

People behaving this way have become caged by resentment, bitterness, unforgiveness, hurts,

malice, ill will and other things. This causes them to behave inconsistent to who they really are, they begin to act like someone who is not born again. In the following scripture, Paul addresses them regarding this statement, that they are behaving like unchanged men. This is the result of hanging on to offenses and letting the devil take them captive.

It is the devils plan to get the born again believer to carry out his will in the church, because the person who has been taken captive will be hanging on to hurts, unforgiveness and being critical, he will use those people to begin to cause strife, contention, division, subversion right in the church coming through the believer, even though they don't want to be doing it but because of being taken captive, they will submit to his plan. The result will be division in the church, he is against unity and harmony in every area.

1 Cor 3:1-3 "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. 2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. 3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" KJV

1 Cor 3:1-3 "However, brethren, I could not talk to you as to spiritual [men], but as to nonspiritual [men of the flesh, in whom the carnal nature predominates], as to mere infants [in the new life] in Christ [unable to talk yet!] 2 I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not yet strong enough [to be ready for it]; but even yet you are not strong enough [to be ready for it], 3 For you are still [unspiritual, having the nature] of the flesh [under the control of ordinary impulses]. For as long as [there are] envying and jealousy *and* wrangling and factions among you, are you not unspiritual *and* of the flesh, behaving yourselves after a human standard *and* like mere (unchanged) men?" AMP

What is the behavioral pattern in relationship to people that have been taken captive by the devil? The majority of people who are believers will change their behavior patterns regarding the devil, but there are a few people who are believers, who refuse to change and consequently they are the ones that will continue to cause strife wherever they are. These people are continually speaking about leadership, complaining, being critical and never satisfied with whatever is being done in the church. There is a deception that they believe they are doing the will of God, they have moved from church to church, not realizing that maybe there is a problem with themselves. This is what offense reduces the believer to, thinking that everyone is against him or her. They have never dealt with the offense and have never forgiven, have never acknowledged a need of change and don't realize that the devil has been using them. The believer that has been forced by the devil to do his will, they don't want to, but cannot for whatever reason make a change, are opposing themselves, unable to be who they are called to be, they don't cease from talking about the offense that was done to them or acknowledge the truth that there must be a change. The change must come with repentance and forgiveness not just saying they are sorry. The believer that has been taken captive by the devil, has at any time the power and ability and at any time in their life that they chose can get out of the trap but the deception is they don't realize that they need to change, a recovery to take place, a process to get out of offense, to change there must be humility, this being a characteristic of God, the devil hates humility, he is all for pride and uses it as a stronghold against the believer.

Titus 3:3 "For we also were once thoughtless *and* senseless, obstinate *and* disobedient, deluded *and* misled; [we too were once] slaves to all sorts of cravings *and* pleasures, wasting our days in malice and jealousy *and* envy, hateful (hated, detestable) and hating one another. " AMP

As believers we must confess and take a stand that we will not be taken captive or to be used as his tool in any way, in our homes, work place or in the church.

Mark 11:22-25 "And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. 23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. 24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. 25 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." KJV

Mark 11:25 "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him and let it drop (leave it, let it go), in order that your Father Who is in heaven may also forgive you your [own] failings *and* shortcomings *and* let them drop." AMP

These scriptures tell of the importance of forgiving whoever has offended us, before we begin to pray, but it also tells us that importance of once we have forgiven them to let the offense go, drop it, leave it, just let the offense drop in order for the Father to do the same for us. Many times believers think that they have forgiven, but as they continue to talk about the situation it becomes apparent to others that the believer hasn't really forgiven. By continually talking about offenses the believer is taken captive again by the devil, snared by their words to carry out his plan. Unforgiveness is like a poison to us, hanging on to unforgiveness and continuing to discuss the offense will weaken our testimony, other people don't want to hear what you have to say because your actions are speaking so much louder, therefore you can't be the person you want to be. The outward manifestation or fruit of forgiveness is someone who has dropped the offense, let it go, they leave it alone, walking away. Believers cannot continue to talk about an incident and expect to get over it.

How do we forgive? There has to be an acknowledgement of the hurt and we have to repent of being hurt, unforgiveness seems so unfair because we were the one who has been hurt, but the unrenewed mind does not want to implement the hurt in their lives. The following scripture tells us what it is like to make Jesus Lord of our lives, learning how to take on His character.

Eph 4:17-32 "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, 18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: 19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. 20 But ye have not so learned Christ; 21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; 23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; 24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. 25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. 26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: 27 Neither give place to the devil. 28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. 29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. 30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." KJV

v. 32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you

God forgives us based on what Jesus has already done for us, His finished work on the cross, He does not forgive us because we deserve it, it is only based on what Jesus did. When we begin to forgive, we may not want to forgive, but we must forgive others based on what Jesus has done, not because they deserve forgiveness or have asked for it. Because we have been forgiven of our debts and are now as believers seated in heaven we become bestowers of forgiveness, just like God forgives based on the finished work of Jesus.

How does this work out in a practical aspect? In the following scriptures, Peter has been teaching about the husband and wife becoming as one and continues to teach how we are to walk in love with others, dropping any offenses. When there has been an offense, drop it and let it go, render a blessing to them, instead do the exact opposite of the offense in order for us to receive a blessing. We are called to receive blessings and by blessing others we plant a seed of blessing for ourselves. We are instructed to pray for those who have offended us in order for them to receive blessing, but we must forgive not speaking evil of them, dropping it, letting it go.

1 Pet 3:8-11 "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: 9 Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. 10 For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: 11 Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it." KJV

v. 9 Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

1 Pet 3:9 "Never return evil for evil or insult for insult (scolding, tongue-lashing, berating), but on the contrary blessing [praying for their welfare, happiness, and protection, and truly pitying and loving them]. For *know that to this you have been called, that you may yourselves inherit a blessing* [from God—that you may obtain a blessing as heirs, bringing welfare and happiness and protection]." AMP

Matthew 5 basically gives the same teaching for our benefit.

Matt 5:43-45 "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine 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 ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." KJV

We can get over some of the deep hurts we have received over the years, it may take a period of time, but we can if we will only start, praying for those who have hurt us for their welfare and protection, in order for them to receive their blessings. We have been called to do this in order to receive.

Don't keep talking about it, quit being the victim and grow up and become like Jesus. Getting out of the flesh and getting into Gods presence will make it easier. What will our priority be standing before God, wanting to hear "well done" if we have continued to hold on to unforgiveness or offense?

In contending for our destiny we have to acknowledge the truth that we have been snared or trapped by the enemy, causing trouble in the church and with relationships, by holding on to offense and unforgiveness we have to let go in order to hear God say "well done".