Devotion #286

**Holding Grudges**

**Ephesians 4:32 (NASB)** *“Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”*

There are many damaging things that have come from sin. But one that is terribly damaging is the inability, or I should say, unwillingness to forgive. Sin has so controlled the human heart that forgiveness is not something people want to think about, much less act upon. But yet the Lord says we are to do just that. Because in doing so we are more like Him. (Ephesians 5:1).

I remember a story one of our church members told me years ago. It was about two men who hated each other. And twenty years after one of the men died, and the living man said that if he could, he would dig up the dead man’s grave and beat him again. Now that’s holding a grudge and certainly living with an unforgiving heart.

Most people would never say something like that. In fact, most people are very good at looking different from a person like the man I just talked about, but not so different in their hearts. There are many, many people who hold something against someone else but never let it look like they are holding the grudge. But God knows and internally the person knows. They may not consciously be aware that they are still holding a grudge but there are some tell-tale signs that they are. For example, when a person says they have forgiven someone of something but it still comes up in conversation over and over, there is good evidence they have not truly forgiven that person. That doesn’t mean we forget what was done or said about us or to us. Our brains don’t have that ability, depending on the circumstances. But we do have the ability to let go of the hurt in our hearts. Our minds may remember, but our hearts can let it go through the power of the Holy Spirit. And we can tell we have let it go because our words and actions toward that person are different than what they once were. Now our motive is to see our own hearts and what needs to change and to pray for the other person. Granted, this takes time, possibly years, but that doesn’t mean our hearts have to be bound to the pain anymore.

When Paul was writing to the church in Ephesus he was helping them know how to live with one another. The last three chapters are dedicated to just that and covered many topics. One was the power of grudge holding, but he knew the greater power of forgiveness with Jesus as His model.

Can you imagine being Jesus? The Lord Himself, Creator of all things, comes to earth to rescue lost people. And instead of being grateful, they turn on Him and put Him on a cross. Yet He has the ability and willingness to forgive His perpetrators even while dying on that cross. That example is what we are to follow. For those of us who have given our hearts to Him, we are commanded to forgive those who hurt us because that identifies us with our Lord.

I understand how difficult it is to forgive or not hold a grudge. But it is doable. It’s doable because God told us to let hurts go. If it were not doable He would never have commanded it. You might ask where to begin? First, ask God to show you your heart towards people you struggle with. Second, once you are aware of that, ask God to forgive you of what you have held against that person. Third, give that person and your grudge to God. Just let Him have it, and He will free your heart. You may have to do that over and over until you have really let it go. And again, this doesn’t mean you will forget what was done to you. But your heart will not feel the pain like it once did. And you will be able to love that person, even if from a distance, and the thought of them will no longer cause your heart to tighten and your countenance to change. You will take on the same heart the Lord had for his accusers. A heart of compassion and mercy. Why? Because you will see them as lost or stuck in a state of blindness to what is in their own hearts. And you will be able to to love them for all the reasons God loves them. It’s challenging I know. But it is doable. God will help you. So start with your heart and let Him show you what He has forgiven you of. When you see that, it will be easier for you to forgive others.