

What you need to know about
FORGIVENESS



• R E N É P E Ñ A L B A •

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René Peñalba

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INTRODUCTION

Forgiveness, or lack thereof, affects our whole being. It affects our mental state, our emotions and even our physical-organic state is affected by what is happening in our life, in relation to forgiveness.

Hospitals are full of people who cannot be diagnosed, because doctors and specialists do not know what they have. This is one of the reasons why, the illnesses that these people suffer have been called psychosomatic illnesses, since it has to do with the fact that the person begins to "somatize" their anguishes, their afflictions and their fears.

"Soma" is the Greek word to refer to "body"; So these people "somatize" their mental and emotional states by involuntarily and unconsciously transforming psychic problems into organic symptoms. When that happens, the person becomes ill, and doctors look for the source of their illness, sometimes without results.

We all need to forgive and to be forgiven.

It is worth clarifying that forgiveness has two courses of expression: On one hand, receiving forgiveness, that is, being forgiven; and on the other, extending forgiveness, that is, forgiving others.

All human beings need forgiveness; and not because we are saints or sinners, but simply because we are human. Throughout life, we all need forgiveness on more than one occasion. We need to be forgiven, one or more times in life. The other course of expression of forgiveness is that everyone, just as we need to be forgiven sometimes, must also need to forgive someone sometime or another. For our own good, for our well-being, for our safety, or for our health, we need to forgive. No one can escape from these two needs!

We need to receive forgiveness, and we need to extend forgiveness to others. This is absolutely inevitable for every human being. This statement is due to what the apostle James says: *"For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body."* (James 3:2 KJV)

Note the phrase of only three simple words; *"we offend all"*, on which we base our previous statement.

It continues to say: *"If any man offend not in word"*; and with this phrase explores the impossible: that someone could be the exception of this. Such a person hasn't been born, nor will be. And if such a person existed—look at how it is qualified: *"The same is a perfect man and able also to bridle the whole body."*

Is there be a person with the capacity to restrain his whole body, his appetites, his primary needs —or should I say primitive needs—? Will there ever be someone who can have or exercise such government, such dominance, or such self-control? That perfection can only be a mere aspiration for us mortals. Because the opposite is true: That we fight with our low passions, that we fight with the claim and desire of our most carnal and primitive instincts.

So, listening to the impossible, is what this author says: "*If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.*" That isn't what's real. The first option is the real one: We all offend many times. We make mistakes. We affect even those we love the most with our mistakes. That we make those for whom we should fight and sacrifice every day suffer. That we betray our most important decisions. That we betray our values. That's the real thing! ... Hence, certainly, "*we all offend many times*".

And this is the reason why we need to learn to deal with forgiveness: both the forgiveness that we must receive, and the forgiveness that we must extend unto others.

This means that we all need to be forgiven and we all need to forgive. All without exception. Think of the person you admire the most or think of the holiest person you have ever known; well all

—including that person to whom you profess your greatest admiration— need to be forgiven and also needs to forgive.

How we receive and extend forgiveness determines the effect on our overall health and well-being.

Pay attention! This is crucial in relation to forgiveness: How we receive and extend forgiveness determines the effect on our overall health and well-being. In other words: Depending on how you feel forgiven or how you forgive others, will determine the product and end result of your comprehensive health. Other people will not do it, neither will life nor will luck; you will determine it with the way in which you receive and internalize forgiveness, that is, with the way you know how to forgive others completely. In this way, you determine what will happen to your health, what kind of well-being will be yours, how your mind and emotions will work. Hence, by interacting healthily with the forgiveness factor, you can prevent organs in your body from getting sick, since with the way you receive and extend forgiveness, determines its effect on your overall health and on everything that has to do with your well-being.

So, if you thought that this was a trite, spiritual matter with no practical validity, you were totally wrong. This is a comprehensive health issue. You can take all the medicines you want, visit as many specialists as you can, spend all the money you

have or choose the medicine you think can help you; But if you do not know how to interact with this factor called forgiveness, you will surely be more likely to get sick than other people. Odds are that your sleep won't be restful, that your relationships won't be healthy, and that your body won't function properly.

Forgiveness has to do with mental hygiene, it has to do with spiritual, emotional, relational well-being and, of course, with physical well-being.

Forgiveness has to do with everything! So I call it comprehensive wellness. And I insist, the forgiveness factor powerfully affects the integral well-being of every human being.

This is why it is worth reflecting carefully on forgiveness; on how it intervenes in this phenomenon of psychosomatic diseases by triggering serious problems in the health of the individual, on how to know if it has really been forgiven, and to know the effects and consequences of refusal to forgive; That is what this book is about.

Let me now introduce what I will call the "Incidence of Forgiveness in Holistic Health" chart. Let's look at the Scriptures to see how forgiveness weighs on the holistic health of individuals; we will see that forgiveness is a matter that is not only concerning the spiritual area, but also the mental, physical and all the spheres of the human being.

Part One

THE IMPACT OF FORGIVENESS ON OUR INTEGRAL HEALTH

The Bible offers us a very complete text regarding forgiveness. In fact, we are not going to have to resort to other scriptures. It is a psalm that warns us of this incidence, shows us the person in a bad state and serious crisis, and even tells us how to get out of that situation.

It is found in Psalms 32, which states in its initial verses:

"Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, «I will confess my transgressions to the Lord». And you forgave the guilt of my sin. Therefore, let all the faithful pray to you while you may be found; surely the rising of the mighty

waters will not reach them. You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance."

Psalms 32:1-7, NIV

It starts by saying: "*Blessed is the one*". In the more traditional versions of the Bible like the King James Version, the expression is translated as: "*Blessed is he*". Want to know why? Because the most commonly used word in the Bible to describe a supreme welfare state is "Blessed", that comes from the Hebrew, "*esher*", word that has to do with a state of comprehensive health, total balance; life balance in which the body, mind and soul work well. "*Esher*" translates in more contemporary versions as "*blissful*" and as "*blessed*" in most biblical versions.

Let's study the passage:

- *Blessed is the one to whom his transgressions are forgiven..." It is a true happiness experienced by those who have received forgiveness. Forgiveness affects the health of the person whose sins are blotted out.*
- *"Blessed is the one" —it emphasizes— "... whom the Lord does not take into account his wickedness and in whose spirit there is no deception."* And look carefully, it continues to say.

- *"When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer..."* The aggravation of this does not respect schedule. You lie down, and it's the same; you get up, and it's equal or worse... *"For day and night your hand was heavy on me."*
- *"Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said..."* This has to do with what you say to yourself, doesn't it? Because someone else can tell you, but as long as you don't tell yourself nothing will happen... *"I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord." And you forgave the guilt of my sin."*

This is impressive! It's interesting too! This is the whole picture. There's a whole diagnosis of what happens to a person when they are in bad shape concerning forgiveness. Furthermore, when we consider the rest of this Psalm, we will see the solution and medicine of this critical condition; But for now, this portion gives us all the necessary elements to demonstrate how the person who seeks and receives forgiveness manages to recover from four serious conditions.

The person who seeks and receives forgiveness ...

The person seeking and receiving forgiveness recovers from four serious and dramatic conditions. What conditions are these?

First condition...

He recovers from a deterioration in his physical state

Physical illness is not the first to manifest and evidence. It is usually the latter. However, curiously, it is the first thing that we miss to see. And the Bible, which has this revealing capacity, brings us this effect from the beginning, which is the final effect in the symptomatology of unforgiveness.

I'll explain it this way: When your body sets off its alarms, when you have to run away in search of a doctor, when you have to visit a hospital, when you have to go buy expensive medicines, although it is the first danger that you actually notice, but it is not; it is actually the final phase of a process, but for you it is the first sign of affection that you notice, and that makes you run to find a cure and a solution.

Before, we used to say: "It is that I am having a bad streak", "It is that I am somewhat stressed this season", "It is that I walk with an annoyance due to lack of rest", "It's that I need a good vacation",

"It's that I have problems at work", "There is a guy who bothers me, I don't like having him next to me at work"... And the truth is that before that your body breaks completely, you give yourself a thousand and one reasons. But when your body begins to give way and break, you no longer can play with that and you start looking for the real reasons for what is happening to you and you are told to do something about it: Well, in the same way, the Bible begins with the final effect - and the first one we notice is what happens to our body.

Heed what the biblical text says: "*While I kept silent*"; that is to say, while I did not want to think about that matter, while I did not want to face it, while I did not want to solve it, while I evaded the matter, while I said one thing for another, while I self-diagnosed myself erroneously, while I gave myself bad answers, while I told myself what it was that wasn't right ... Meanwhile ... the body started to get sick from the pressure. Hence, the importance of speaking to oneself with the truth. Because when you keep the truth to yourself and put off facing an active situation, the beginning of a process of deterioration of your physical state, and you may even get sick from something that will kill you, of something that will take you directly to the grave.

Notice what triggers the physical problem: "*While I was silent.*" While I didn't want to face that situation, "*my bones were consuming.*" This is extremely interesting. What he is showing us is that

there are illnesses binding on mental, emotional, and spiritual distress. There are diseases emanating from inner distress, and particularly as it relates to this biblical text, they have to do with unforgiveness.

All of this means that unforgiveness — whether you need to receive it or need to grant it — can make your body sick. And it is not true that it is because of a lot of work, nor is it true that it is because she no longer had a good vacation, nor is it true that it is because her teenage children are giving her problems...

None of that is true! The truth is different. The truth is that there is something within you that you need to finally confront, for your health and well-being. Saving it, keeping it quiet, imprisoning it or repressing it has never been and never will be the solution. "*My bones* ..." Let's pay attention to these two words: "*my bones*". It is translated this way, from the original Hebrew "*etsem*", a word that in its literal translation means "*bones*", but by extension it is translated as "*the body*". So, "*etsem*" is figurative of: substance, essence, forces, vigor and life. Hence there is something in the substance of his being, something in the strictly physical-organic that can be affected by his spiritual condition.

This biblical passage from Psalm 32 does not refer to something spiritual or symbolic. We must know how to differentiate the symbolic language of the Bible from the direct, plain language of literal application in the Word; and this passage does not

refer to the subjective, spiritual or inner being dimension. No. Hence we must understand that "etsem" literally means "bones" and "body", and is figurative of the substance that gives and keeps us alive.

So when you feel sick - even if you are not a doctor of profession - you know that something bad is happening to you, right? And we know that we will need to go to a doctor to tell us what is happening with our health, because we have the ability and the power to interpret what we are feeling. And the truth is that when you feel sick, you feel sick! You don't need lab tests or exams; it just says, "Something is happening to me." "I feel something strange in my body." You know something is happening to you! That, precisely, is what the passage is describing: "Something" in his substance, "something" in the essence of his strength is wrong ... That "something" was translated as "my bones".

And what happened to his bones? His bones were "*consumed*". What a word! They were consuming! Returning again to the Hebrew, it comes from the word "balah", which in the text appears as "*consumed*", but in a broader sense it is translated as "to discard due to maximum and extreme use".

But what is our theme? Forgiveness. So what are you saying in regards to that? It is telling us that when we find ourselves in that inner turbulence

due to lack of forgiveness, we are making maximum use of the energies and forces of our body, we are making extreme use of our body. We are making "*balah*" use of our body! And our body will end up being discarded because of that extreme use. We are going to get sick until we die! Our ending will be a "*balah*" ending, discarded by maximum and extreme use.

There are people who do not realize that the body is consumed and sick not only by physical activity or by working too much, but also by being burned inside, that is, by being consumed inside for moral and spiritual reasons. As a pastor I attend to people that are distressed; and one of my goals in counseling is to try to lower the emotional and spiritual intensity that the advised are experiencing. I understand that if I cannot lower that intensity in what they are feeling, these people will not solve their crisis and they will get worse. Literally, they are going to be consumed inside, due to the maximum and extreme use of their mental, emotional and spiritual resources.

"*Balah*" is also translated as "spend". The body is "*wasting*", consumed from within by a lack of forgiveness, perhaps without being able to notice it or admit it in time. And pay attention to this: "*Balah*" is also translated as "*get old*". There are people who grow old prematurely! Emotional and spiritual suffering and mental agony age people.

And it is that in relation to forgiveness we usually perform certain tricks, and with a certain

cunning we say: "Oh no, my problem does not have to do with it, it is simply accumulated stress." But the question we must ask ourselves is: Stress, due to what cause? This form of escape and escapist response is not conscious, but we do it unconsciously.

And the truth is that this condition will be consuming you, no matter what you say. You can say: "No, I already turned that page on forgiveness"; or with a kind of macho attitude saying: "I don't care what happened" or "I don't care about that person, that incident or that situation. I already got over that." And you say it in an apparently convinced tone, but the truth is another. The truth is that inside you are spending, consuming and aging, caught up in the "*balah*" experience, and that process will not stop until you face the real situation!

So, this piece of Scripture provides us with a highly graphic language regarding the incidence of forgiveness in the integral health of the person. I ask you: Is there be a more dramatic description of the physical ravages of unforgiveness? Is there a more distressing, more dramatic, or more distressing way to graph the effect of unforgiveness in what we are reading? "*While I was silent, while I did not want to solve this problem of forgiveness, my bones were consuming.*" This person is getting sick physically! The Bible describes, then, the final condition for unforgiveness: Physical illness.

Therefore, it is not true that you can have your

forgiveness stored, as if you had put it in a drawer. It is not true that by force of not speaking it, by force of not thinking about it, by force of not saying it, it is resolved. It is not true! The more you silence it, the more its destructive power is enhanced. The more you evade it, the more it enhances its invasive capacity.

This is the first condition from which the person seeking and receiving forgiveness recovers: from a deterioration in their physical condition.

Second condition... Recovers from a state of chronic depression

What caused the situation "*my bones were consuming*"? Two factors were the determining factors: The first was already denounced: "*While I was silent.*" While I kept silent, while I did not want to speak the truth. The second factor, the determining factor of such a pitiful tale is: "*For my wailing all day.*"

You, except for natural causes and processes of life, become ill by somatizing mental, psychological and spiritual conditions. In these cases, your body becomes ill; but before that you started to get anxious and depressed; This is the cause or origin of many diseases, and has to do with not knowing how to deal with what goes on inside.

If you ask me what I have learned the most in life, I will tell you that what I have learned is

knowing how to interact with anxiety. Because I was a distressed child, I was too sick, too lonely, too emotionally lacking. I lived without relationships; I couldn't socialize; I didn't learn to interact with others. I had many difficulties. And one of the things I appreciate in the Word of God the most is that it revealed to me something of the mysteries of human emotionality. In short, the Bible taught me to know two mysteries: To know God, what He is like; and know what I am like, how we humans are.

Going back to the idea a few paragraphs ago, before your body becomes ill due to psychosomatic reasons, you begin to experience an anguished mood, so you cannot sleep, and you start to get depressed. That is, when watching a movie to get rid of the overwhelmed state that haunts you does not help you, if right after the end of the movie you remain the same or worse. Or when you go on vacation for a few days, to return worse, tired, in agony, frustrated and depressed. All this has to do with what the biblical text read refers to: "*For my moaning all day long*".

And notice what an interesting word! "By". This short word of just two letters, denotes and indicates cause, origin. There are those who suffer from physical illnesses, their bodies are consuming themselves in disease; and they have as antecedent or primary phase a state of internal distress and chronic depression.

The psalmist is not writing a theory, nor is he

referring to other people. He is speaking in the first person; he says: "*While I was silent* —while I was evading this reality— *my bones were consuming.*" And what is more: "*A moan seized me*" —a spirit of depression invaded my person.

I work in counseling processes with people who tell me: "Pastor, I am not happy at all; I received a promotion and I am not happy, I bought something for my house and I am not happy, there is nothing that makes me happy." Do you know what that is? The epicenter of a moan in those people, a moan that needs to be healed by the power of God; because that causes widespread deterioration.

And what an expression! "*For my moaning all day.*" This, I understand very well. I suffered neuropsychological diseases from childhood, a state of chronic depression since childhood. My normal state since childhood was to be sad, agonized, consumed with extreme thinness as a result of something that was consuming me inside. As a young man, my beloved wife had to accompany a living dead man for many years. So I say I know what the phrase "*by my wailing all day*" refers to. I understand very well this graphic language of the Bible: "*my moaning of the whole day*".

It is the Hebrew "*shagah*", which was translated as "*moan*", and which can be perfectly translated as "*crying of stress and weakness*". There are those who cry with anger, I can understand that. But when you cry about the very weakness you feel

inside, this is something else. Do you know what's in the stressful cry that is aggravated by weakness? There is total helplessness; that is to say, one is totally defenseless. You feel that absolutely nothing can be done; you feel totally incompetent, without the least capacity.

"*Shagah*", means crying of stress and weakness. That is the translation in all its terms and meanings. But "*shagah*" literally translates: *Ahhhhh!* That guttural sound that does not even express a word, but that releases in that exhalation the strength and life of the person. It is a highly graphic word: *Ahhhhh!* When the person can no longer endure or can't take it anymore, when he can no longer bear it, when there is no explanation ... and there is only one moan, a "*shagah*", of the whole day. It refers then to the clamor that comes from the root of the human being to find himself in a state of prostration, in a severe, deep and endless depression. People who have this cannot get out of bed. They literally feel like their bones hurt; all of this is, binding with forgiveness or lack of it.

The person seeking and receiving forgiveness will solve your chronic depression problem. In my case, I am still the same person, but part of my good spiritual, mental and physical state has to do with the experience of feeling forgiven, and at the same time, having become a man who forgives the sin of others against me.

The person who resists saying, "I need forgiveness," or the person who resists saying, "I need to forgive others," will make those before mentioned ailments permanent. First, physical ailments; his body and bones will be consumed. Second, the emotional, emotional and spiritual illness; there will be moaning, a permanent "*shagah*", an "Ahhhhh! I can't take it anymore!" "I can't take it anymore."

Third condition...

You will come out of a stagnation in your productive capacity

If being sick of the body or being in a chronic depression, is already a tragedy; imagine if there is a stagnation in your productive capacity!

There are people who say to me, "Pastor, I literally walk into my office and sit there doing nothing. Hour after hour goes by, and I can't do anything. I can't do my job; I can't act upon my responsibilities. I feel like an automaton on my desk. I'm not producing anything." And it is not laziness on the part of these people, but their condition has to do with an unhealthy process that is being activated. And curiously, in many cases, it has to do with that forgiveness factor.

The text we read in Psalms 32 says: "*My strength was weakening, as in the summer heat.*" That makes me think of the small apartment where I live, where the natural light spaces are highly

appreciated by my wife Haydeé and myself; so we take care of them in a really special way. We have a small patio, which is like a light well that illuminates the social or main area of the apartment. Well, right there we have a beautiful garden. In this small patio we have some vines that we have taken care of, and it is a place where we sit down to have tea in the afternoon. We also have another source of natural light, which is a corridor along the social area. We slide the doors that lead to that hallway, and we feel a shower of sunlight enter through them. We have huge laurels there. I have never seen laurels grow as high as these, they have a height of several meters, and they rise splendidly towards the sky, as if wanting to reach the sun. But, when summer comes, how our plants suffer in those little gardens! They decay, some dry, and more than one has died. That is what the biblical passage is graphing when it says: "*My strength was weakening, as in the summer heat.*" An intense and calcinant effect fell on his productive capacity!

In the biblical passage it was translated as "*my strength*", the Hebrew word "*ishad*", which basically translates as "*freshness*". Returning to the context of the garden, you notice that something bad is happening to your plants and shrubs, because the first thing they lose is precisely the freshness. "*Ishad*" is also translated as "*vigor*"; and literally, as it appears in the text, referring to "*force*". You are going to start to decline. You are going to become a

decrepit man or woman, not because you are too old, but because something is happening inside you. The complete sentence says: "*My strength was weakening.*" It is a gradual process. It is not something that happens from one minute to the next, but "*he got weaker.*" You start to say to yourself "What's wrong with me? I feel old; but I'm not that old. What will happen to me?" As a pastor, I often meet young people in their forties, who go through life as if everything weighed on them. Oh, if I were forty, I would start over! But what happens to those people is a gradual process of weakening.

But let's go back to those inquiries in the original text. It is the Hebrew "*haphak*", which has to do with a process of weakening, which has to do with "going back" in every way. In other words, everything reverts to the opposite direction, opposite. There are people in whom everything began to reverse: their freshness, their strength, their thinking ability. There were many hours before where he/she could work without much rest, now he/she cannot do it with those same efforts because with little he/she feels extremely fatigued.

"*Haphak*", means reverse, to turn everything in the opposite direction. Its meanings are: finish, withdraw, reverse ... And, be amazed by the other meaning; pervert. This is also included as a meaning of "*haphak*". And what is perverting? To pervert is to disturb the order or the state of things. There are people who have altered or disturbed the

order or state of things in their lives; including their physical state, which already denotes the process of disturbance, the "*haphak*" process of weakening.

Let's notice that the pain that is being described isn't an ordinary pain. It is not referring to a little headache that you got because you were upset in those days. No, it is a "*haphak*" process; a debilitating process that ends our strength, that takes away our abilities, that reverts all our potential; and that also perverts the capacity, strength, order and state of our life situation. And what follows is that you start visiting doctors, and they find nothing to diagnose on you. And you know what? They will not find anything in you, because what you need is to be diagnosed by the Word of God. And you need to make sure of two things: One, receive and sufficiently internalize forgiveness in your life; like any sinner who needs to internalize God's forgiveness. And two, you need to grant forgiveness to other people.

This weakening process —this "*haphak*" process that I have been describing— is when forces and capabilities begin to retreat; just as we find the word "*withdraw*" in the meanings of the term. In this way, your strengths and capacities are withdrawn and you go to the extreme of weakness. They are reversed, they are withdrawn.

And a fourth condition...

It will solve the deterioration of your spiritual condition and your relationship with God

Let's go back to what has been said: "*While I was silent, my bones were consuming inside me*", this is something physical. "*In my moaning all day*", this is depression, something psychic. "*My strength was weakening like the summer heat*", reduced productive capacity. And to all this, the psalmist added the following: "*Because day and night your hand weighed on me.*"

Who is he referring to? It has to be God. He says: "I am sick, I am depressed, my life is stagnant and I am not producing anything, rather I am going backwards; and I feel that day and night, Lord, your hand weighs upon on me.

What was translated as "weighed" is the Hebrew word "*kabad*"; which means "*to weigh*" or "*to be weighing*", in a totally bad sense, strictly negative. And it can be perfectly translated as "*severe burden*", "*something burdensome or afflictive*"; or as "*aggravate*", as the King James Version translated: "*Because your hand was aggravated upon me.*"

How awful it is to carry a spiritual weight inside, which communicates to us the feeling of having God against us! Feeling that weight is in us, but that it's there with God's permission. This is when the person feels that he has God, more against than for

him. I don't know about you, but I once felt that I had God more against than in favor of me. And it was the greatest agony and the greatest weight!

And you can deal with someone not loving you. You can deal with someone letting you down. You can deal with someone telling a lie against you. You can deal with someone scheming against you. But there is something you cannot deal with: You cannot deal when God's hand weighs —"kabad"— on you! It is an impossible weight to bear.

So, there are four conditions that are resolved, solved and healed when the person seeks and receives forgiveness. We can recover from:

1. From the deterioration of a physical illness condition.
2. From a condition of chronicle depression.
3. From the stagnation of its productive capacity.
4. From the deterioration of their spiritual condition and their relationship with God.

All that is solved, all that is resolved, all that is healed. The big question is: And how can I do it?

How can we free ourselves from all the suffering and affliction that these four conditions cause us?

In the first four verses of Psalm 32, we read the symptoms experienced by someone who has not received or sufficiently granted forgiveness. But starting in verse 5, we find the indication of how we free ourselves from those four conditions: sick body, sick mind, reduced capacity, and stagnant spiritual life.

To answer your question, how can I free myself from all this? We read in the psalm:

"Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord." And you forgave the guilt of my sin. Therefore, let all the faithful pray to you while you may be found, surely the rising of the mighty waters will not reach them. You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance."

Psalm 32:5-7, NIV

It begins with a "but" —there are bad "buts" and good "buts" in the Bible. Before we had read:

"While I was silent, my bones were consumed by my moaning all day. My

strength was weakening like the heat of summer, because day and night your hand weighed on me ..."

"But ... "This is a" but "that can solve:" But I confessed my sin to you, and I did not hide my evil from you. I told myself... —because before you tell God, you must tell yourself —: "I'm going to confess my transgressions to the Lord and you forgave—that's not even in the future! It doesn't say "and one day you'll forgive—... mi iniquity and my sin." That is why the term "selah" appears at the end of this text, which, evaluating what is read, says and means:" Think about these things. "When you read the Bible, and accompanying a passage the word "selah" appears, means, think, value, meditate on these things. That is, you should not let it escape. Read on:

*"Therefore let all the faithful pray to you
While you may be found; surely the rising of
the mighty waters will not reach them."*

Here we are told what to do. The first thing that appears here is what I will call the liberating trinomial, which consists of:

1. Confess, don't hide.
2. Tell yourself the truth.
3. Turn to God.

This is the trinomial that leads us all to redemption. The trinomial of all liberation. With it, you open the heavy padlock, break the heavy chain, stop being in disease, in slavery, in deterioration, get out of stagnation. Your life ceases to be rotten waters when you activate this liberating trinomial: Confess and do not hide, tell yourself the truth and turn to God. This is what you need to do!

Is there someone you should forgive? Talk to God, confess to God the truth about that anger, that annoyance. Speak the truth to yourself, don't tell yourself a false story, speak to yourself according to the facts in truth, and stop exaggerating it. If you put all the blame on someone else, accept and take your share of the responsibility! Speak the truth to yourself in your own face, and tell it to God! And if what you need is to receive forgiveness, it still works: Confess it and do not hide it, say it as it is, and turn to God.

And what happens as a result of this liberating trinomial? With it comes a triple bottom line. What is the triple result? The triple result of activating this liberating trinomial is:

***First,
Plentiful waters may overflow, but they
will not reach you***

I was sick. I lived sick for more than half of my life. My body got sick, my soul got sick, my mind got sick, my relationships got sick, because I didn't

accept my story, because I hated my life scenario. I came to the point of hating my parents. I hated myself. I felt angry when I looked in the mirror. Since puberty I had been hitting myself and cutting my body. When I fell into a crisis, I would hit my face with my fist. Locked up in a room, I would take off my belt and self-flagellate to the point of lacerating my back when I hit it with the buckle. And that's how I lived in that struggle against my life —against my history, against everything and against everyone— I was flooded, as in waters overflowing with a disease.

Ask me now, my life is the same. My story is the same: abused child, sick child, suicide attempts, and drugs. My life is the same, I am the same person. But why are those waters not reaching me? The waters do not reach me because I went through those processes of God's healing. I focused my life on the redemptive and therapeutic perspective of the Word of God. And although I have essentially the same memories, I am the same person and I come from the same distressing background, the rushing waters cannot reach me. Now I sleep in peace, now I walk in peace, now I have something that I did not have: I have serenity! And having serenity does not mean having a perfect life and zero problems to solve, but rather that I can tell myself the truth; it means that I can face whatever it is, the good, the bad and the ugly in life.

So, the first of that triple result of applying the

liberating trinomial: Plentiful waters may overflow, but they will not reach you. It means that you are going to have problems and that conflicts will always be latent ... But they will not reach you!

***Secondly,
God will protect you from danger***

What danger? The danger of getting sick and dying before your time. I live under the conviction that we bury people every day who shouldn't have died. But that's the way it is, we create conditions that are averse to our peace and well-being, to our life and our history. And we are affected by diseases from which we would not suffer if we were in another spiritual condition.

But if you manage to internalize everything you need in relation to forgiveness, and apply this liberating trinomial of confessing and not hiding, of telling yourself the truth about your situation and turning to God, as a result God will protect you from all forms of danger.

***In third place,
God will surround you with songs of
deliverance***

This is literal! It is not lyrical! It is not poetry! It is not something philosophical or symbolic! God will literally surround you with songs of deliverance.

I once experienced songs of liberation. I remember times when I collapsed —and when I

went into a crisis and collapsed on the floor—; hours and hours lying on the floor; usually in a fetal position, totally helpless and hopeless. My wife, whom we married when we were very young, barely 19 years old, offered me a blanket or a pillow; but I, lying on the ground, all I wanted was to die, for the earth to swallow me. I was on the ground because I felt like a worm, and that was my place - according to me. And there, in the silence of the agony, songs of deliverance began to surround me and with them healing processes began to be activated.

This is the triple result of applying the liberating trinomial of forgiveness: rushing waters will not reach you because God will protect you from danger. And God will surround you with songs of deliverance.

Part Two

HOW DO WE KNOW IF WE HAVE REALLY FORGIVEN?

In other words, what is and what is not to forgive? It is not you and I who are going to define what forgiveness is. You can make your own design of forgiveness or make your own conception of forgiveness, but this does not mean that you have forgiven.

All the time I meet people who say they have forgiven, but they only put a little dirt on top of the matter or they just put the event in a dark corner of their lives. It is important to fully understand what it is to forgive and what it is not, and that is the intention of this second part of the book, to define what is and what is not to forgive.

My first words in this regard are nothing more than echoing what many say, what many think: "I forgive, but I never forget." And it is a phrase reiterated by us. With it we are only showing that we do not have the full and complete understanding of what it is to forgive. You cannot dare to live that way; you cannot dare to think so wrongly. It is an absurdity when it is brought into the light of the Holy Scriptures.

Notice rather what the Word of God tells us. Join me in the reading of a text in Hebrews 8:12. It

refers to God's forgiveness, but it has aspects that we must observe and that apply to any way of forgiving. It goes like this – this is God speaking—: *"For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more..."*

Note the total contradiction to what many say. Many say "I forgive, but I never forget"; But God tells us in this passage how He forgives: forgiving has to do with remembering no more. God says that He forgives intrinsically, that He forgives from within, which has to do with not remembering more of those events, with not remembering more of those situations.

And I want to highlight the phrase *"I will never remember again."* The word that is translated as remembering is the Greek *"mnáomai"*, and it has these meanings: remembering, —notice that it is an action in process, it is a continuous action—. God says that He will not be remembering. *"Mnáomai"* is also translated as *"to collect"*, but to collect with the intention of giving back, with the intention of rewarding, with the intention of punishing. What is God saying when he says, "I will forgive your iniquities, and I will never again remember (*mnáomai*) your sins"? He is saying that God has decided not to be remembering it. God has decided not to be collecting all the time with the intention of giving back or punishing.

So what that text is telling us is what forgiveness means in general terms. He is saying -

in the Greek "*mnáomai*" - that forgiving is the voluntary decision to no longer collect the faults of others. So when you are still collecting faults, you still have not forgiven. When you still take it out again and rub it in the other person's face, it means that you are collecting it and you have not really forgiven it; because if you forgive you are no longer a collector of offenses, you are no longer collecting with the intention of re-punishing the person, you will no longer remember.

You must make the voluntary decision of doing this! That does not mean erasing your memories, it is not brainwashing; it has to do with the activation of the will, you will have to decide: "I will not be remembering it again." "*I will no longer bring it up every three months, every six months or every two years as a matter of conflict.*" It means to forgive, to give up collecting that memory, that bad event, that action with which you were offended or wronged.

So in introductory terms we saw what forgiveness is. It is the "*mnáomai*" of His will; He no longer continues to collect bad memories or faults from other people.

To this I want to add something else, and this is about the false assumptions we have about forgiveness. There are so many things people suppose, assume, affirm and say about forgiveness! And they are wrong, they are actually false assumptions about forgiveness.

False assumptions about Forgiveness

One, Forgiveness is prizing the offender

There are people who say to me: What?! You telling me that I have to forgive a person who hurt me, offended me, and wronged me in many ways?! Let me tell you the biblical truth about that false assumption: Forgiveness is not a reward for the offender, it is, on the contrary, a reward for the well-being of the one who grants forgiveness.

If you forgive, forgiveness will be a reward for your own well-being. It is you who will receive the benefits of forgiveness. So, get rid of that false assumption about forgiveness!

Two, In order to forgive, the offender must be regretful

If you expect someone out there in your life to repent in order to have to forgive you, do you know when you will forgive them? Never! It is not true that idea that for you to forgive someone that person has to repent. That idea is not true! Having to repent before being forgiven only applies when it comes to receiving divine forgiveness.

You do have to repent for God to forgive you; and if you do not repent, God does not have to forgive you and, in fact, He will not. But if it is that

you are going to forgive another person, he does not necessarily have to be sorry, you must decide to forgive him whether he repents or not.

Three, The only way you can forgive is if you forget

—«Let me be, Pastor, let time pass, so that I can forget what they did to me, and when I do, then I will be able to forgive them»— is what they tell me. Curiously, it is the other way around, rather, we only manage to forget when we are willing to forgive. If you pretend to do it the other way around, it won't work for you. If you want to forget first and then forgive, you won't be able to do it. Conversely, forgetting is achieved when, in an act of faith and an act of the will, you decide to forgive, even if it bothers you, even if it disturbs you.

How can you forget someone who ruined your entire life or large sections of it, someone who affected long years of your history? You will not forget it; perhaps even on the day of his death he will remember it. Therefore, to forget, forgiveness comes first and perhaps later forgetting will be achieved. Because when you forgive—in an act of faith and obedience to God's Word— then you find yourself beginning to heal inside, and in the process you can forget.

***Four,
Not having to deal with the offender,
makes it unnecessary to have to forgive***

—«As long as I don't see him again, I don't have to forgive him, besides, that person has already left my life, he's no longer part of my daily scenario», some think; either they no longer see him again, or he has gone to another country, or they no longer have a relationship with him. Wrong idea. Even if you don't see that person again, even if you don't see your offender again, you carry that weight with you.

In counseling, we teach that there is no space or time in emotional life. What does it mean? That what affects us emotionally does not respond to space or time. In other words, if someone affected you here in this city, and that person or you leave it, it will still hurt, because what affects your emotional life does not respond to borders or spaces. If something affected you, even if you go to the other side of the world, it will continue to hurt and will continue to disturb you. Nor does it submit to time, because if someone hurt you ten years ago and has not managed to overcome it, even if 20 more years go by, it will still hurt, because in emotional life there is no time. But, on the other hand, it is totally false to think that if that person left your stage, you no longer need to forgive them; you will have to, because otherwise it will continue to affect you, no matter where that person is.

Five,

There's a time when it's too late to forgive

As long as there is life, there is still time to forgive. I have assisted people at the time of their death - which, incidentally, for me to bring a human being to life or to hand them over to eternity are the two most sublime acts we can think of; and by assisting them in that mysterious yet supremely extraordinary moment in life, I had to help them to forgive at their last breath. Sometimes this is characteristic of a person in the last moments of his life; where he cannot die, it is difficult for him to leave this life, and it is because he has not been able to forgive; and you have to help him forgive, and insist that he forgives at the last moment of his life.

Don't wait for the end of your life to forgive! Why wait until then? On the contrary, as long as there is life, you can and must always accept that it is still time to forgive.

Six,

Some offenses are so bad that they don't deserve to be forgiven

There are those who have told me: "Pastor, you can forgive some things, but there are others that are unforgivable." Well, you know what, it's not like that! The truth is that, the more serious the offense is, the more forgiveness is required. I find in the Bible that there is only one unforgivable sin, only

one in the whole Bible, and the one who mentioned it was Jesus Christ. To the amazement of his listeners, he said that the only sin that qualifies as unforgivable on God's part is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which specifically means attributing to the devil things that God does. He said it in the context of a miracle that he had just performed, and some said that he had performed that miracle by the power of the devil, and there he explained that the only unforgivable sin is to blaspheme against the Holy Spirit. So —incidentally— I urge you to watch your mouth when referring to the things of God: If you don't understand something, don't vituperate or denigrate or detract from it. Do you know why? Because in the face of what one does not understand well, one must be silent.

And in the context of forgiveness among us —humans— there is no such thing as a serious offense that does not deserve forgiveness. On the contrary, the more serious the offense, the more the medicine, the more the therapeutic, redemptive and salvific effect of forgiveness is needed.

Seven, Forgiveness is a sign of weakness

Some say to me: «Pastor, if I forgive this person, they are going to take advantage of me —this is so crude a phrase— and I will be giving him signs of lack of character. Well, if I run to forgive, I show signs of weakness». You know what? That's a

wrong thought too. Forgiving is, on the contrary, a display of spiritual strength. The weak cannot forgive, the sick cannot forgive, the fainthearted cannot forgive, and those who suffer from moral and spiritual dwarfism cannot forgive. Only someone who manages to conquer himself can forgive, who manages to conquer his pain, his anger, and his resentment.”

So don't tell me that if you forgive, you will show that you have little character, on the contrary, if you forgive it is because you have managed to mature, you have managed to put yourself above human passions, you have managed to rise above the distressing events of life.

In addition to the above, I want to keep piling on more ideas about forgiveness. Something else that seems very important to me is to clarify 'What is not forgiving?' and 'What is forgiveness?'

What is not forgiveness?

It is not to excuse the offense or the offender

Some believe that to forgive is to excuse the offender; that is to say: «Well, I put myself in that person's shoes, he was probably in a bad situation, he was having a bad streak, or he was probably not doing well» No, forgiving is not excusing the other person. If you want to forgive your offender, and

you start to excuse him, you are not forgiving him; you are only venting his offense, you are not forgiving him.

It is not justifying the offense or the offender

What is justifying? It is arguing for someone so that they are not guilty. So, to justify is to forgive the person? Does saying «there were circumstances that surely caused this person to act badly with me or with another person» mean you forgive them? No, forgiving is not justifying the offender.

It is not approving of the offense or the offender

By forgiving, we are not talking about disguising the offenses. It's not about makeup or dressing them with approvals. No, forgiveness is not about consenting to the offense or the offender's conduct.

It is not evading the offense, much less taking the offender's guilt

How is an offense evaded or the offender's guilt assumed? Here is an example: I was talking to a lady about her husband's infidelities, and she told me in a serene tone: «Pastor, my husband was unfaithful and surely I had to do with that, because in a season of our life I neglected him and even I treated badly» I said to her: "Forgive me, but that

is not so. The fact that you have neglected him or treated him badly will never be a justification for his deciding to get involved with another woman. That was his decision." And she was —with nobility— taking the blame, but her mistakes and his infidelity belong to different areas.

So, forgiveness is not to excuse, or justify, or approve, or evade or assume the blame, the offense or the offender; all of this has nothing to do with forgiveness! Perhaps then you will wonder what forgiveness consists of, and that is where I want to get: to the biblical perspective on forgiveness, in order to discard all private concepts and all imperfect conceptions about what forgiveness is.

What is forgiving?

What is forgiveness according to the Word of God? A text will suffice to answer this question. It is found in the Gospel according to Matthew. It reads like this:

"Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. "At this the

servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go."

Matthew 18:23-27, NIV

This text gives us an extraordinary amount of elements that answer the question, what is forgiveness? Of course, from the biblical perspective.

One, Forgiving is being aware that there is a debt

The fact that someone must be forgiven has to do with a debt that the person accumulated. In this case it is not a material debt but a moral debt, but a debt, after all.

Note lo que leímos: este hombre le debía a su señor miles y miles de monedas de oro. Es una deuda; usted no puede llamarle de otra manera, no puede

Notice what we read: this man owed his master thousands and thousands of gold coins. It is a debt; you cannot call it another way, you cannot qualify it another way, you cannot look for an adjective that helps you define forgiveness. It is a debt that that person acquired with you.

For this reason, it does not work to justify, it does not work to apologize, it does not work to evade, it does not work to approve, and it does not work to take part of the blame; none of that works, if you are going to forgive. If you dedicate yourself to apologize to the other, to try to justify him, or to say to yourself «I will try to understand him», it will not work.

You don't have to understand him, just be aware that that person owes you a debt. So call things by its name; do not call them as they are not just to try to resolve the situation. What this person owes you is called a moral debt.

So the first thing the Bible shows us is: To forgive is to be aware that there is a debt.

***Two,
To forgive is to be aware that it is an
unpayable debt on behalf of the debtor***

Get this into your head and your heart: That person, even if he kneels down and gets on his knees and cries or hits a wall, cannot pay you. It's called forgiveness for that, because it is not just a debt, it is an unpayable debt.

This means that all the pain you went through, all the emotional bleeding, all the disappointment you went through, all the anguish and grief you experienced, is something that that person cannot afford. Admit it, understand it; even if that person throws himself under the tires of a car, he cannot

afford it. If he tells you he won't do it again, he cannot pay you with that. If he humbles himself and comes to beg you to give him a chance, you can give him a chance, but that doesn't mean he can pay you back...

We have read: *"He did not have anything to pay with"*. Do you know why some forgiveness issues are not resolved among human beings? Because we don't understand the nature of forgiveness. It is understood that under the term forgiveness, whatever the offender can do or offer, can make you pay off that debt.

Nothing your offender does will spare you the tears you once shed, the heartbreak, the disappointment, or the anguish you experienced; no matter what you do, he can't pay it.

The harm that someone did to you is simply priceless. There is nothing the offender can do that can erase the marks of the offense; that's why it's called forgiving —as opposed to justification, excuse, or any other treatment—. It is called forgiveness because it is a debt, and because it is an unpayable debt on behalf of the debtor.

Three, Forgiveness is treating the debtor with mercy

The passage says that the lord to whom that man owed him took pity on him. There can be no forgiveness if mercy does not intervene; and since

whoever hurts cannot pay, then a virtue has to intervene, a gift that comes from Heaven; mercy has to intervene.

You do not forgive your offender because he promised to behave. You do not forgive him because he told you that he will do better. You do not forgive him because he humiliated himself. Forgive him because "*Something*" is activated within you, this "*something*" is called mercy.

I like the Latin root of the term mercy; "*misères*" – mercy and "*cardio*" - heart. It means that when you apply mercy to a person, you put their miseries in your heart, and you empathize for that person.

Hence, forgiving is treating the debtor with mercy. What is mercy? Mercy is the divine attribute by virtue of which human miseries and sins are forgiven. Mercy is a gift that God gives us at a time of crisis in our life. Mercy is not something that we extract by digging into our hearts, mercy is something that is sought up there, in Heaven.

There is something in you called justice. And in your justice, you feel that someone who did you wrong needs retribution, needs punishment; But when you overcome your own sense of justice and enter the new dimension of mercy, then that divine attribute reaches you, it nests in your heart. And from there, as a divine virtue, it is possible to forgive the sins and miseries of that person. And no matter what that person did to you, or how acute

the pain was, you can forgive them. And adding to the above, mercy is granting a favor that the other person does not deserve; is to grant an undeserved favor. No one is ever going to deserve forgiveness; but he is forgiven in spite of that, that is why it is called forgiveness. You forgive yourself in an act of mercy, you forgive yourself in a decision of the will.

Four, Forgiveness is condoning the debt

That man could not pay him, but that man forgave him the debt; he was forgiven, because it was priceless. There must be forgiveness. What is forgiveness? The Royal Academy of the Spanish Language tells us that to forgive is "to forgive or remit a death sentence or a debt." That's —conceptually— condoning.

For its part, the biblical passage says: "He forgave him the debt." I want to refer to the original texts in which the Greek word "*afiemi*" is used, which is literally translated as "*forgive*"; but the other meanings of the word "*afiemi*" are: "*to abandon something, throw it out, remit that, let it go, omit it.*" All this is considered in the word "*afiemi*"! It means that in order to forgive you have to abandon it, to throw it out of your head and out of all that is yours, you have to get out of the moral and spiritual intoxication in which it has you, and finally begin to omit it. By "skipping it", you must understand that you should no longer accept that

anyone talks to you about the topic. And if someone brings it up, tell them: "I don't want to talk about it anymore, I'm not interested anymore." So you are omitting it, it is no longer on your agenda or on your list. You are forgiving him; you are forgiving the debt that he cannot pay.

And on what basis do we condemn a debt? You may ask yourself. That moral debt is forgiven or condoned on the basis of our own moral debt. And it is based on the fact that you also owe, you also have debts. Here I quote the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our debts, just as we forgive our debtors." The heart of the Lord's Prayer tells you that you have debts that need to be forgiven, that you need God to forgive your mistakes and sins that you have committed; that you need God to forgive you for slips, lies, deceptions, intrigues and any form of evil that you ever practiced. You need Someone Higher—God—to forgive your debts; and based on this and in obedience to the Word, forgive anyone who owes you a moral debt. Only a hypocrite would say that he has no moral debt. There is no human being on the entire planet, in any age, culture or setting, who has not accumulated a moral debt to Heaven. We all have a moral debt, and on behalf of our own particular and individual moral debt, we forgive and condone anyone who owes us a debt.

Five, ***Forgiveness is releasing our debtor***

The passage not only says that he "*forgave him the debt*", it also says that he "*set him free.*" That is important, because you may have said, "I forgave," but in your heart you never let him go, you never release him. He said he forgave that person; but every time something reminds you or you look at it, that person still remains in your heart. You cannot attempt to forgive a moral debt to someone without implying the latter, letting him go, releasing him, letting it go. And that will only be achieved on your knees. You will not achieve this by taking out a tissue to wipe your tears, you will only achieve that by fighting with yourself.

When I finally managed to let go of people who once hurt me, I did it after crying out, moaning, crying; after telling God that it was unfair, that what I felt was anger, that what I felt was resentment. But when I was defeating and conquering all those claims of the soul, then the moment came when I said: "Lord, I release this person, in my heart."

You know that you have managed to let go of him, when that person passes by and you can greet him as if nothing has happened. When someone talks to you about that person, you no longer criticize or speak out against them. That is a sign that you have already managed to release him, that you have already completely released him, in your heart.

Notice what an interesting phrase! "*I released him.*" It is the Greek "*apolúo*" that intervenes here. "*Apolúo*" is translated as "*to free completely*", as "*to forgive*", as "*to let go*", as "*to release*"; it is also translated as to "*loosen something*", "*let it go*", "*allow it to get lost*"; and be amazed! "*Apolúo*" translates to "*finally let something die*".

So, stop watering the plant of unforgiveness! All the anger you have against that person, and all the criticism you have about that person in your heart, let it die already!

These are five ways to understand forgiveness from a biblical perspective. It is the biblical definition of what it is to forgive: it is to be aware that there is a debt, it is to be aware that it is an unpayable debt on the part of the debtor, it is to treat the debtor with mercy, it is to forgive the debt, and it is also to release the debtor.

Part Three

THE NEGATIVE TO FORGIVING, EFFECTS AND CONSEQUENCES

There are times when one says no - to forgiving - because the annoyance is so great, isn't it? There are times when one says no, because the pain of the offense is still very intense and the injury is still alive. And when the experience continues to disturb, when something still within us is too sensitive, it is difficult to forgive. Then we enter into that refusal to forgive, which in some cases is a direct refusal, the person says: "I'm not going to do it"; but in other cases it is a tacit or implicit refusal, it is not that the person says not to forgive, but, just the same, he is not forgiving.

Let's take an introductory text in the Letter from James. It reads:

"And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."
James 5:15-16, NIV

Notice that it mentions sickness, health is talked about and being raised from sickness, and forgiveness is also involved; and it insists that there will be forgiveness, there will be healing, that the person will be lifted up, and even his sin —if he has committed it— will be forgiven. Note that there is a close connection between forgiveness, illness, and health. This text says that prayer can heal a sick person; and that if you pray for the sick, the Lord - because only He can do a miraculous healing - will raise you up. Note also the existing connection: It says that if there were the component of "sin", which causes people to be in a condition of "disease"; and if the person is administered and receives "forgiveness", then there will be "healing." It is a close connection with illness or health depending on how that forgiveness is being administered.

In other words, what the text tells us is that forgiveness releases a wonderful power that causes healing in our bodies. Forgiveness is like a button that activates healing processes.

How many sick people have I cared for! And you pray for them, you fast, you reprimand the evil one and they are not healed. Why are some not receiving healing? This may be a common denominator of people who are not healed: there is still something that is not right in their hearts, they still do not overcome certain experiences, certain events that have occurred, they still do not

overcome certain relationships that caused them pain and trauma; And by not being able to overcome those conditions through forgiveness, they are causing their evil to last indefinitely. They may never be healed, they may be buried from that condition, and it will be because they never managed to establish a correct and healthy bond with forgiveness.

Forgiveness, then, is not a romantic theme, it is an absolute necessity of all human beings. In this forgiveness, it is not about who is a saint or who is a sinner, but rather that all human beings need to forgive, and we forgive so that a beneficial effect comes to our minds, to our bodies, to our emotions and to our spirit. There is even enough basis in the Scriptures to affirm that there are people who will have constant poverty and will not achieve success in life, precisely because they are still bound by unforgiveness.

What happens when we refuse to forgive?

What happens when —for one reason or another or for one explanation or another— we are unwilling to activate forgiveness in our lives? The answer to this question is what will occupy us in the rest of this book: the effects and consequences of the refusal to forgive.

Well, let's start by reading a portion of the Scriptures in the Gospel according to Matthew:

“But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded. “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’” But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened. “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

Matthew 18:28-35, NIV

Notice this facet of God —which many times we resist because we coin wrong ideas about Him—. And we like to think of God as an old man with a

white beard, an old man who is no longer upset and who is total patience; we like to think of a God in the manner of "Santa Claus", who only relates to us to bring us gifts on special dates. Notice that facet of our Heavenly Father in relation to forgiveness: *"My heavenly Father will treat you like this, unless each one forgives his brother from the heart."* We must realize, then, that God intervenes to treat our lives when we do not honor his Word, when we do not follow his commandments.

Effects and consequences of the refusal to forgive

What does the passage of Scripture show us as the effects and consequences of refusal or resistance to forgive? Let's see:

Resist forgiving, Demands a high price of affliction and torment

If you refuse to forgive - and you can give whatever reasons you want, and you can talk about the other person's injustice and wrong, and you can say whatever you want to justify your refusal to forgive - that will bring you to a halt, and its high price is one of affliction and torment.

The passage says that the lord handed him over to the jailers for torture. The King James Version says that he handed it over to the "executioners." Both jailer and executioner, are translations of the Greek "*basanistés*", which literally means "*torturer*". It is not a figure, it is not a symbolism, and he was handed over —literally— to a torturer. "*Basanistés*" is also translated as tormenting, as anguishing. Notice what happens to the person who refuses to forgive: he will pay a price of grief, torment, pain. This Greek word "*Basanistés*" comes from an articulation of the passive verb "*basízo*"; it is the passive conjugation of the verb that is translated as torture, as affliction, as torment, as lash and as fatigue. So, "*basanistés*", both in direct translation (jailers and executioners) and in its origin, means the same thing.

The meaning "fatigue" catches my attention and arouses my curiosity. There are people in a chronic state of fatigue. They wonder: What is wrong with me? They say: "I feel sick, I go to the doctors and they don't find anything in me, they tell me that it is just stress that has worsened in me." And it is that there will be no diagnosis of any disease, because the cause is not physical or mental, it is spiritual. We have a three-dimensional or tripartite entity; the human being is spirit, soul and body, and a dichotomy or separation between these three dimensions cannot be established. Hence, your mind affects your body and spirit, because you are

one entity; your body and soul have the power to benefit from a correct state of mind, but it also works vice versa. So when we speak of unforgiveness, we mean a predominantly spiritual cause that has a physical, emotional, and psychological effect on the person.

And that process of fatigue, grief and - literally - torture, could be provoked by someone? No one could provoke it upon us! You cause it to yourself when you refuse to forgive, when you say, "No, I am not willing to forgive; what they have done to me is very serious." With this, what you do is dictate sentence to your own condition, to your body, to your mind, to the state of your whole person: Affliction and torment. And everything that involves you will be affected by it.

I ask, do you suggest some kind of demonic activity as a result of the refusal to forgive? It looks like it is. The biblical text does not say that you are going to feel a little bad, it does not say that you will have some daily problems; It says that if you do not forgive, you will be handed over to the torturers and that the "*basanist*" will fall on you, and that the process of anguish, of torment, of affliction and fatigue will be activated by your refusal to forgive.

I watched my mother lose herself in her unforgiveness towards my father; and she lived like this for long years, and her illnesses were the order of the day. Over the years she accumulated a great resentment against my father, he passed away and

she was still distraught because she was extremely resentful. It took her many years to learn to forgive with God's help. But she did. Now she has an extraordinary health, talks about whatever subject, has extraordinary lucidity and intellectual capacity; now she is in excellent condition; She is ninety-odd years old, and has a health condition superior to when she was in her thirties. But that state of health was activated on the way, when she was willing to forgive.

I do not know if you noticed while reading the passage, which says that his master "handed him over to the jailers to torture him until he paid all he owed." This "pay" was translated from the Greek word "apodídomi" which has to do with giving back, with making people pay, with rewarding that attitude, with unloading something on that person, with making them accountable. In other words, by refusing to forgive your offender, you are subjected to a true torture that requires you to return all that you owe to God. Is it good business not to forgive? Of course it isn't! It is not intelligent, it is not advisable, it is more of a self-sabotage.

Decide to forgive! Stop making a monument to what happened, stop making a great altar to what they did to you. Excuse me!; because otherwise that process is going to be reversed on you, it is going to be unloaded on you and you will end up paying a heavy and burdening bill of grief and torment.

And going back to the phrase "until he paid everything he owed", do you know what it means? It means that the account that had already been forgiven was reactivated; the account that he had already been forgiven for was updated again. The servant in the biblical account had already been forgiven a debt, but when it was his turn to forgive someone and he was not willing, then his master ordered that his balance be charged, and his debt be activated again. They had forgiven him, they had pardoned him, but he was in debt again. And he will have to pay for it with enormous grief and torment.

***Resisting to forgive,
Offends the Holy Spirit and corrupts the
inner life of the person***

In other words, when you resist forgiving you begin to mess with God. His lawsuit enters the sphere of the lawsuit with God, to the offense of God; and not only that, a process of corruption is also activated in his spiritual world, a process of disarray where his inner life becomes corrupted.

Join me in reading a passage in the Letter to the Ephesians. It is Paul who exhorts saying:

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving

each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

Ephesians 4:30-32, NIV

There are basically three levels to this passage. First, it speaks of an offense to the Spirit of God; second, it describes a process of internal decomposition, the person becoming bitter, allowing himself to be carried more and more by anger and anger falls into mismanagement of his conduct—he shouts, slander, falls into jealousy and suspicion—and third, it talks about the topic of forgiveness.

Note the interconnection between the offense of the Spirit of God and the process of spiritual deterioration of the person. That is to say, that you begin to be "another person", your integral being begins to be ruined; Before I was not a bitter person, now I am; Before he was not so angry, now he is angry about everything; now he even shouts, speaks badly to people and can even slander others by saying something that is not true; now it falls into forms of malice and zealotry... All this because of the lack of forgiveness.

Hence, how you respond to the biblical admonition to be kind and compassionate to others and to forgive others has an impact on your relationship with the Holy Spirit, on how the Holy Spirit views your life and values your acts; it has an impact on their spiritual condition, on my inner condition of mind and soul. You offend the Holy

Spirit, and you fall into bitterness and spiritual deterioration. And how do you solve it? How do you avoid messing with God, how do you avoid offending or grieving the Holy Spirit?

How do you avoid a process of corruption in your person? Forgiveness is the determining factor in solving it.

Let's dive a little deeper into this passage. The expression "*do not offend*" that we read here, the Reina Valera Bible translates as "*do not grieve*"; The Greek word "lupéo" is then translated as having "wronged" or having "grieved"; and it also has these meanings: "affect with sadness", "cause pain", "offend" and "aggravate". The expression can also be translated as "sadden the Spirit." I don't know about you, but I don't want to get involved with God, I don't want to put up a fight with the Lord. I don't know how you interpret your life story —your facts, your attitudes— but I try to do so in light of the truth of the Word.

Once I felt like God was angry with me, and I felt the superlative and capital censure on the part of the Holy Spirit towards me. And, you know what? I don't wish it upon anyone. I prefer to fight against the evil one, I prefer battles of another kind, I prefer internal struggles with my inner person, and I prefer to fight against the circumstances of life; but to alter the peace with God, affect my relationship with God, offend my Lord, offend the Holy Spirit of God... I don't wish it upon anyone!

My advice to you at the light of this passage is the following: You should note the link between forgiveness, offending the Holy Spirit, and inner decay manifested in bitterness, screaming anger, slander, and malice. You should also notice how close these aspects are to each other and how close is the interaction between them. And you should never forget that the refusal to forgive will determine the injury to the Holy Spirit and the spiritual deterioration of your life.

Resisting to forgive, Opens doors for Satan's control

When you resist to forgive, you give the key of your life to Satan, and he will open the door and go in and out as many times as he wants. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul warns us about this danger. He says:

"Anyone you forgive, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes."

2 Corinthians 2:10-11, NIV

Again, notice the connection between forgiveness and the fact that Satan has or does not enter our life in this text; the connection between

forgiveness and the fact that Satan gains an opportunity to enter our life and our affairs.

Forgiveness closes the door on Satan; and when we refuse to forgive, the door opens widely for him, and he will enter and begin to act in all areas of our life. It is going to get into our family life, it will affect our peace and tranquility, it will make a hole in our money bag, and many more things will happen that have to do with the activity of the evil one against our lives.

The text is saying, then, that every refusal to forgive is an opportunity given to Satan to control our life. Hence, you are saying yes to Satan when we refuse to forgive, and that may be the worst decision you can make regarding the offense that someone may have committed against you.

The apostle Paul also makes it clear to us that when we decide to forgive, we do so because we are not ignorant of Satan's wiles. Interesting! If you ignore his tricks, you refuse to forgive; but if you don't ignore their tricks, you run to forgive! Because you know that this way you do not give Satan any opportunity to take advantage against us. In the King James Version, "*ruses*" is translated as "*machinations*", and in English "*devices*", which literally means "*machinery*". They are translations from the Greek "nóema", which is also translated as "*artifacts*", "*purposes*", "*cunning*". And Paul advises us not to ignore any of this. Satan has no power over us, what he has is sagacity. He is a liar; he has

no power. God has power; but what Satan uses is an intelligence greater than ours, a sagacity that we lack. So Satan uses all that cunning to work against us; they are his machinations, his tricks, his machineries.

Let's ask ourselves: Do any of us want Satan's schemes at work in their life? It makes no sense to let him introduce all his artillery, all his machinery, all his artifacts to harm us. I don't think that neither you nor I want the artifacts of Satan, the machineries of the evil one, operating in our affairs. And since we don't want any of that, then we have to forgive, it's that simple!

Therefore, forgiving is not giving something to someone who has done us wrong, forgiving is giving something to ourselves. The gift is not for the one who is forgiven, it is for the one who forgives. And part of his gift is to lock the door so that Satan cannot enter.

Resisting to forgive, Blocks your relationship with God

No matter how much you pray or how sincerely you pray, refusing to forgive blocks your relationship with God. I want to quote for you the words of Jesus Christ taken from the model prayer, the Lord's Prayer.

Matthew says:

"For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will

also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

Matthew 6:14-15, NIV

Interesting! You can bind God. He can forgive you, He wants to forgive you, but He says He won't.

And it is that the refusal to forgive blocks your relationship with God; it is as if he binds Himself, and He cannot do anything for you. There are people who say: "I don't know what happens, I pray and I don't feel anything. I start to pray and I feel that God is distant. I feel that my prayers do not go beyond the ceiling; I feel that God does not speak to me, He does not answer me." Could it be that there is some link between this and the fact of not adopting forgiveness as a lifestyle?

So, there are four great effects and consequences on our refusal to forgive: You will have to pay a high price of affliction and torment, you will offend the Holy Spirit and corrupt your inner life, you will open doors for Satan to control your life, and you will block your relationship with God.

A LAST WORD CONCERNING FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness should not be an act at a time of crisis in your life, forgiveness should be your way of living, your lifestyle. Never forget that we all offend all the time and we are all offended in one way or another, including you. Hence, you will need to forgive every day; from forgiving the stranger who got into your car in a disrespectful way, creating risks for you and your vehicle, to forgiving an offense of greater significance and magnitude.

So embrace forgiveness as a way of life, as a lifestyle! Forgive everyone who offends you and receive the forgiveness that others grant you. May this be your attitude to life, may it be your way of resolving differences and offenses.

To end...

A time of prayer

We cannot finish the reflection on forgiveness that we have been doing throughout the pages of this book without leaving time for prayer.

Just be very clear, first of all, that God loves you, despite your faults, and that there is no sin that God cannot forgive you from; And also, that your decision to forgive will involve setting your offender free of all debt and freeing yourself from

any illness or anguish you have been experiencing.
PRAY...

Father, today, by virtue of your Word exposed on my conscience and through your Holy Spirit, I receive, first of all, the forgiveness that you have granted me through Jesus Christ. I believe that none of my wickedness remains on the account, because you have erased them with the blood of your Son spilled drop by drop on Calvary; and my faith in Him and in His work empowers me to receive your forgiveness for all my sins. And when later I sin again, which will happen to me by my human nature, your Word tells me that *"if we confess our sins, You are faithful to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness"*; therefore I understand that your forgiveness is the constant of your grace that allows my debt to be forgiven and my sin to be cleansed.

Father, in a general review of my life, I choose the best route to resolve my unforgiveness. And by faith I decide that, there will be no offense that is so great, there will be no person that is so bad, there will not be an episode that has been so distressing, for which I remove it from my forgiveness list. On the contrary, Lord, I know that the more serious the offense and the more painful the experience, the more the medicine of forgiveness is required.

Father that is why today I also want to go further in terms of forgiveness. I want to cover every experience and event in my life that I thought

I had already forgiven, but today I realize that no, I have not forgiven; I want to go back to those memories that I thought I had already worked hard enough to be at peace, but that I realize that still disturb and hurt me. And I ask you, Father that the mantle of forgiveness fall on the people involved in those experiences and events. And by forgiving anew each person that passes through my mind: each of my offenders, my detractors, the perpetrators of evil against me, the destroyers of my happiness and the menacing of my peace, Lord, I forgive each one of them.

Father, as I forgive each of my offenders, I am aware that they are unpayable debts; that I can only forgive them if I treat them with mercy, that I must forgive their debts, and that I must let them go free.

But I want, **Father**, to learn to forgive not only in times of crisis, but I want to adopt forgiveness as a lifestyle, as a way of living, as an attitude in my daily life. Today I receive the solving power of forgiveness, as an anointing with which I can resolve where I was unable to do so before, and that will allow me to rebuild, reestablish, transform and restore destroyed relationships in my life.

Father, I recognize that because of bad experiences in the past, I have dysfunctional relationships today. But today I enter this time of miracles, and I believe that just as you heal any physical illness you can also heal the memories of those bad experiences from my past; and you can

correct in me that predisposition to not forgive that which was activated when someone lied to me, disappointed me, betrayed me and hurt me a lot; and you can heal that pain that predisposes me to resentment, head-on collision, severe and relentless judgment.

In the Name of **Jesus**, I declare over my life a new disposition in God: the disposition to forgive, to do good to the one who hurts me, to act with mercy. I declare that I will prosper and progress in the affairs of my life, because there will be inner health and spiritual health; and all that he touches will be multiplied, and what he undertakes will prosper, and what he sows will be fruitful.

In the Name of **Jesus**, and by the authority of the Word of God, I extend biblical forgiveness to all directions in my life, in my current life scenario and in my history. I forgive with the liberating power of God, and I declare that my physical body, my mind, my emotions and my spirit will be free from all illness, disease, depression, sadness and from any other evil or form of slavery. I declare that my physical body, my mind, my emotions, my spirit, and even my relationships will be benefited by the power of forgiveness.

In the Name of **Jesus**, I declare over my life a cloak of the benefits of health, well-being and stability, which come from forgiveness. Today I receive the benefits of someone who is willing to forgive: I receive health for my body where there is

disease, I receive health for my mental state where before there was anguish, fear and uncertainty. I bless my life endeavors; and I declare that there will be nothing blocking or stalling them, due to unforgiveness in my life. I bless my relationship with God; I will listen to His voice, for He will remove all obstacles that have prevented me from listening to Him and speaking to Him. All obstacles are removed as my obedience to God's Word is activated!

In the Name of **Jesus**, I bless my family, my brothers, my friends, my colleagues and all those close to me with the benefits of forgiveness. Let the burdens of oppression due to unforgiveness be lifted from their lives; any spirits of disease that have been afflicting and torturing them may be cast out.

Father, I extend forgiveness to all my debtors, just as you forgive my own debt... In the Name of Jesus!

***Now,
Allow me to pray for you,***

Father, bless the reader who has prayed the previous prayer.

Father, may your forgiveness drench the soil in which the tree of his life is planted, and may the saving, healing and therapeutic benefits of forgiveness reach him. May physical, mental and spiritual illnesses and ailments begin to be healed.

In the Name of **Jesus**, I speak to the body: Spirit of disease, respond to the Word of God! Let go of this person! Diseases that have brought pain and much suffering, and are causing damage to the organs of this body, on the authority of the name of Jesus, I break that power! I speak to the soul and mind: Spirit of depression, I berate you! Go away! Do not afflict this person any more with episodes of past and future fears. Mind of this person, respond! I speak to you in the authority of the Name of Jesus: Be healed! Be free from all enslaving power! May the power of insomnia, extreme worry, and all forms of anxiety begin to be broken by the Power of God. Right now!

In **Jesus** Name I bless your relationships. I declare that you receive the virtue of interacting healthily with people, even with those who do not like you or are not compatible with you, or think or feel differently than you. Be empowered to act as God's agent or instrument among those with whom you associate.

And I declare that there is liberation and healing in your whole being. And now that the Divine Physician is visiting you, raise your hands and receive the healing power of God. He who heals bodies, can heal sick minds, and can forgive sins.

In the Name of Jesus!



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