

# TEACHING NOTES: A Summary of Key Points

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## 'Anchored in Christ' Part 5: 'The Triumph of Forgiveness'

**Main Scriptures:** Numbers 14: 1-20, Colossians 3: 1-17

**Others:** Joshua, chapters 1-3; 6

Today we consider the weighty topic of forgiveness which builds on last week's devices of the heart message. The reluctance to forgive is something we all experience to a greater or lesser extent. It's like a heavy fog which we can't see our way through in any direction.

To recap: I spoke previously of the spiritual heart being a *storehouse*, a repository of all experiences both good and bad. Hurts and wounds can fuel unforgiveness and they need to be identified and brought before God. The mind and willpower may think they can deal with these hurts, but that is often not true (and this false belief is another example of the heart's devices or tricks). It's like Jericho under siege (as in Joshua's time); the walls are thick and high, no one can enter or leave the city, and watchmen on the walls constantly scan the horizon for any potential invader. The heart is similar in the lengths it will go to protect itself from further harm.

Genuine forgiveness needs resurrection power to do what we are not capable of doing ourselves. Our Old Testament reading reminds us of a further incident in Israel's history where the people (except their leaders, Moses, Aaron and Caleb) become stubborn and forgot God's blessing and provision. They grumbled and wanted to take matters into their own hands, and while you should read the full chapter (**Numbers 14**), we see an affirmation of God's character in **v.18a**: 'slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving of sin and rebellion.' The full expression of these qualities is Jesus Christ, and we read in the Colossians passage of the power of the cross in the life of believers. Resurrection power is a circuit breaker when it comes to forgiveness. When we forgive it shows Christ-likeness, and we reflect our gratitude to God for what has been done for us in Christ. We are undeserving of God's love, but forgiven, and so need to be people who can and do forgive others.

This is easier said than done, but the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit *helps us*. When hurts are deep it's too much for us alone. And it's a process that may take some time and require help from others who walk alongside us. The cross was no cheap forgiveness of sin; and our forgiveness can be costly and hard too.

I've titled this message 'The Triumph of Forgiveness' because in releasing someone else (a perpetrator) from past hurts also does something very important inside us - they are forgiven but *we experience new-found freedom*. We no longer carry that burden. We won't forget the experience - it's in our heart storehouse - *but* we won't need to re-tell and resuscitate it over and over again (that only compounds

the bitterness and hurt). Instead, we get free. Truly Christ is our anchor and his Holy Spirit our guide. I share in the video the story of a man who comes to forgive his son's killer, and in an incredible act of kindness washes the man's feet. That act of compassion healed much hurt and anger and was a true demonstration of godly forgiveness. Amazing!

### **Questions to ponder**

1. Why do you think forgiveness is so hard? List some reasons.
2. A wounded heart readily demands retribution but that only perpetuates the pain and anger. Can you identify with this yourself, or know someone for whom it is true? If so, begin to pray for your own hurts, or those of the person you know.
3. Imagine being in the shoes of the man who forgave his son's killer. Do you think you could wash the feet of someone who needed your forgiveness?