

# HAVE YOU FORGIVEN?

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Scripture:

## **Luke 17:6 (ASV)**

6 And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey you.

## **Introduction:**

Most of us know this passage of Scripture very well, but few people know the context of it.

The context of any passage of scripture is very important and therefore we need to examine it. Let us take a closer look at the context of Luke 17:6. To do so, we have to read the preceding passage, starting at verse 1.

## **Luke 17:1-6 (NASV)**

1 He said to His disciples, "It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come!

2 It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble.

3 Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.

4 And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him."

5 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"

6 And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry (sycamore) tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey you.

## **Context of Luke 17:1-6**

The context is all about forgiveness.

In explaining to his disciples about the importance of forgiving others when they sin against you, Jesus uses an example from nature. Jesus is speaking to his disciples about the importance of extending forgiveness to those that have done you wrong, even repetitively.

Jesus said that if you have faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, be uprooted and be planted in the sea. The Vulgate Latin, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions render it, the "mulberry tree", but the Greek is Sukaminos.

Other translations, e.g. the King James Version, American Standard Version and the Wycliffe Bible says Sycamine tree, not mulberry.

- Why did Jesus refer to the Sycamine tree, which is considered by some scholars to be a type of fig tree?

- There is only 1 occurrence to a sycamore tree in the King James version of the Bible and this is it.
- Greek word "Sukaminos" is translated as Sycamine or Sycamore tree.
- These trees grew in the Middle East.
- In Israel it grew specifically in the lower Galilee area.

### **The hurts of life**

- Who of you have ever been hurt by someone else? We all have. When you have been hurt or offended by someone you might feel it's your "right" to hold something against that person. What do we do when we are hurt, disappointed, rejected, offended by people? Many of us carry that hurt with us. We hold on to it. Many even give hurt, disappointment and offense an honorary place in their lives as if it is a treasured possession. The thing is this, unforgiveness destroys you. The Bible makes it very clear that we need to forgive.

You can't just bypass hurt or offense and try to forget it. You must deal with it. It is important that you forgive the person through whom the offense came. As soon as you are in a state of offence, you believe that the offender owes you something because he or she did you wrong. This can be an apology, financial recompense or something else. You are not the judge of the universe and demanding vindication will not help you to move forward. The way to move forward in life is to forgive.

*Matthew 6: 14-15 - 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.*

When you do not forgive your offender, you place yourself in a state of unforgiveness and you will only see the negative things about the person. Unforgiveness leads to you developing a critical and suspicious heart, which will poison you over time. Forgiveness puts you in a place where you can experience renewed and deeper access to God's forgiveness in your life.

### **Don't wait for the apology before you forgive:**

To forgive someone who offended you does not imply that the person needs to repent first. You should not wait for the apology before you forgive them. Forgiveness can be extended with or without an apology, and that is what we should do. By simply trying to forget about the offence or the person does not help you. You need to be proactive and choose to enforce truth into the situation by forgiving.

### **The Sycamine tree explained:**

Like I have mentioned before, the Sycamine tree was a type of fig tree. If you understand the characteristics of this tree, you will understand a bit better why Jesus used this tree as example in how to deal with unforgiveness.

To forgive someone once can be a difficult thing to do, but to forgive 7 times in one day might seem like an impossible thing to achieve, yet God expects it of us.

The disciples did not have the faith to do it.

They realised that to forgive that often is almost impossible, because unforgiveness is something that has the tendency to stick to its victim.

It was just too hard for them to do or to even think that they have to forgive so much, so often. So, they asked Jesus to help them to do it.

Jesus compares the characteristics of the Sycamine tree with that of unforgiveness and bitterness. Let's explore it in more detail.

### **1. The Sycamine tree has a very deep root system**

- One of the trees with the deepest root system in the Middle East.
- It was very difficult to destroy and kill this tree because its roots stretched deep into the earth where the water is.
- The sun, weather could not easily damage this tree.
- Very tough, very enduring in its nature.
- If you wanted to kill the tree you had to destroy its roots.
- If you simply chop it down, it will grow again.

#### Comparison:

- The same is true with bitterness and unforgiveness.
- You cannot destroy it easily.
- Once it has rooted itself in your life you cannot easily get rid of it, neither can you afford to simply ignore it.
- You need to deal with it at root level in order to destroy it.
- Many people live in denial and try to forget about the hurts they have picked up in life, but life does not work that way.

### **2. The wood was popular**

- The wood was popular to use, e.g. in the making of cupboards, especially in Egypt.
- The tree grows quite fast even in difficult circumstances like dry weather, meaning that you could easily find it for carpentry.

#### Comparison:

- Bitterness is something that grows very fast in our hearts if we allow it to.
- It can flourish in most types of heart, but especially where it is spiritually dry, bitterness grows quickly, similar to the Sycamine tree.
- You don't have to search very far to get it, it is easily accessible.

### **3. The fruit it produces is quite bitter (type of fig)**

- The fruit of the Sycamine tree looks very similar to other types of fig trees, but with the difference.
- The fruit of the Sycamine tree is very bitter.
- It looks good, to eat but tastes bad.
- You cannot eat the fruit quickly, you nibble on it because it is bitter.

### Comparison:

- People who harbours unforgiveness in the hearts might look good on the outside, but when you begin to partake of their lives, bitterness is all you will find.
- People with unforgiveness eats at that fruit slowly over a long time.
- Those emotions associated with unforgiveness does not leave a sweet and pleasant taste in your mouth.
- People who embraces unforgiveness often have a bitter view of life.
- They have a tendency to be negative, critical and suspicious about everyone and everything.
- They don't trust easily.

### **4. The Sycamine tree is pollinated mainly through wasps.**

- When the wasp stung the fruit, it helped with the pollination process.
- To reproduce, the tree had to be stung.

### Comparison:

- People who harbours unforgiveness will often have a sting in their words, like the sting of the wasp.
- Their words of then hurts others around them.

### **Faith like a Mustard Seed:**

- Jesus said that if you have faith like a mustard seed you can deal with unforgiveness and bitterness in your life quite easily.
- You don't need that much faith, just a little, as long as the faith is constantly growing and maturing, like the mustard seed.
- The mustard seed is one of the smallest types of seeds, but it grows into a huge tree.

Any person with just a little bit of faith can order bitterness to go, to be uprooted in his or her life. It is done by faith and through extending forgiveness.

- The Sycamine tree, like all other trees, cannot grow in the sea because of the salt.
- It cannot fix its roots in water, so it dies.

It is not what happens to you in life that is the issue, but how you deal with what happens to you.

### **What is your story?:**

Maybe you have lost a business  
Sexually harassed  
Spouse, husband, wife cheated in you  
Father or mother dissapointed you  
Best friend hurt you

Forgive. Let it go!!