



Prison Wall 4: Resisting Blessing (Matt. 5:43-48)

Wisdom Worksheet

Jesus likened withholding forgiveness to a prison (Matthew 18:21-35). The irony is that the person who will not forgive is the one locked inside the four walls. *Forgive* means “to let go.” In order to forgive someone who has wounded us, we must *let go* of four prison walls that incarcerate us in the prison of un-forgiveness. The first prison wall is *revenge*. The second prison wall is *resentment*. The third prison wall is *regret*. The fourth is prison wall resisting blessing.

Remember that in Jesus’ parable of the unforgiving debtor, He described three scenes illustrating the three applications of the story. Scene one portrays the largest debt ever incurred (150,000 years’ wages) being forgiven, or *let go*, vertically from the king to his servant. Scene two paints a similar scenario; however, the debt incurred horizontally between the forgiven servant and his fellow servant is comparatively quite small (a hundred days’ wages). The servant who had been forgiven the largest debt ever incurred will not *let go* of the small horizontal debt with his fellow servant. He wants to *hold on*. Scene three casts a dark reality. Word of the forgiven servant’s behavior reaches the king who responds by throwing the unforgiving servant into prison. Jesus concluded the parable with quite possibly the most sobering words in Scripture, “*This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart*” (Matt. 18:35).



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As we see in Jesus' concluding statement, forgiveness flows from the heart. The Bible teaches us that two heart conditions exist: *proud* and *humble*. A proud heart is hard and unforgiving. A humble heart is soft and forgiving. A proud heart holds on. A humble heart lets go. When someone harms us, we either *hold on* or we *let go*. Grace received vertically from God warrants grace issued horizontally to others. Forgiveness is the vehicle that transports grace.

Do you *resist blessing* your offender?

What is *resisting blessing*?

Resisting blessing is not wishing one well before God and others. Whereas the other three prison walls of withholding forgiveness hold on to negatives, resisting blessing holds on to a positive—I withhold wishing the offender well before God and others—the ultimate goal of forgiveness. This withholding occurs in my heart—my *will*, *emotions*, *mind*, and *spirit*. Whereas *revenge* emphasizes the *will*; *resentment* emphasizes the *emotions*; and *regret* emphasizes the *mind*; *resisting blessing* emphasizes the *spirit*. I choose to withhold spiritual blessing of my offender. In a word, it is *hate*—not loving my neighbor, including my enemy. I yield to the prideful desire to treat others as they treat me. Jesus addressed this in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:43-48).

How does *resisting blessing* affect my vertical relationship with God?

Resisting blessing does not wish my offender well before God. It treats others as they treat me. Jesus said, that His followers had been taught a legalistic interpretation of the greatest horizontal commandment to love one's neighbor (Matt. 5:43). They had



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learned to treat others as they were treated by them. “*Hate your enemy*” did not come from Moses’ Law, but from the Pharisees as an abuse of Leviticus 19:18. In fact, the Law stated that hate was not to flow from one’s heart (Lev. 19:17).

Hate hardens my heart toward God. This occurs in at least two ways. First, it impedes my love for God. When I resist blessing my offender, I am not loving my neighbor whom Jesus defined as everyone, including my enemy (Lk. 10:36-37). Rather, I hate him. When I hate my enemy who is made in God’s image, I am not loving God (1 John 4:20). Second, resisting blessing my offender affects my vertical relationship with God by hindering my prayers because I will not pray for my offender, wishing him well before God. For example, Peter said that a husband’s prayers are hindered when he is inconsiderate and disrespecting toward his wife (1 Peter 3:7). When I hold on to resisting blessing my offender, I am inconsiderate and disrespecting of someone else created in God’s image.

How does *resisting blessing* affect my horizontal relationship with others?

Resisting blessing does not wish my offender well before others; it treats others as they have treated me, hardening my heart toward my enemies (Matt. 5:43). Rather than love my offender, I actually hate him because I will not wish him well before others. As a result, I will not love him in the way that God wants me to love him, and I surely will not pray for him, even when praying with other people. I find myself withholding positive conversation or behavior with my offender and about my offender with others.

How do I let go of *resisting blessing*?



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I let go of resisting blessing by *wishing my offender well before God and others*. This occurs in two ways, I: (1) *love my enemy* and (2) *pray for him even when he persecutes me* (Matt. 5:44).

How do I let go of *resisting blessing* vertically with God?

I wish my enemy well before God. I love my enemy by praying for him to be blessed in the exact same way that I want to be blessed by God (Matt. 5:44). This releases the heart of Christ in my vertical relationship with God who loves both the righteous and the unrighteous (Matt. 5:45). Christ loved His enemies and prayed for those who persecuted Him (Lk. 23:34). I love God by being His son, surrendering to Christ in me (Gal. 4:6).

Pause and let Wisdom Work

Each day for the next 30 days, read Matthew 5:43-48, then pray. At the close of your prayer, review the dominant theme that you have requested from God for your life. Now pray that blessing for your offender.

How do I let go of *resisting blessing* horizontally in relationships?

I wish my enemy well before others. First, I *love my enemy* by serving him in order to meet a legitimate need in his life. This love fulfills Moses' Law (Matt. 7:12; 22:37-40; Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:13-14; Jas. 2:8). Second, I *pray* for him when I am with a close confidant with whom I share most of my walk with Christ. If prompted by the Holy Spirit, I then pray with my offender that God would bless Him in the same way that I have asked God to bless me. All of this is a prerequisite to, not a result of,



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reconciliation. This treats my offender differently than I was treated which exhibits the humble, forgiving, and wise heart of Christ rather than the proud, unforgiving, and foolish heart that is opposed to Him (Matt. 5:46-47).

Pause and let Wisdom Work

During the next 30 days, love your enemy by discovering a need that you can meet. It might be a house that needs cleaned, leaves that need raked, children that need watched, clothes that need replaced, a car that needs repaired, a vendor that needs to be recommended, or a potential customer that needs referred. Ask your mutual walk partner in Christ to pray with you in order to bless your offender. After serving your offender, if prompted by the Holy Spirit, humbly pray with him requesting God's blessing in his life.

How do I experience freedom?

I continue to practice the instant forgiveness experiment. When someone sins against me, I instantly *let go* of the four prison walls of *revenge, resentment, regret, and resisting blessing*. I do this by humbling my heart to Christ in me. He is complete in His love for all, including my enemies (Matt. 5:48; cf. Lk. 6:36; Deut. 18:13).

Pause and let Wisdom Work

When harmed by another person, experience freedom by immediately *letting go of resisting blessing and wish your offender well before God and others*. In order to do this, immediately *love and pray* for anyone who offends you. Serve your offender by meeting a need, and pray for him to be blessed in the way that you want to be blessed. It will not be you doing so, but Christ in you. God is love (1 Jn. 4:8; Ps. 145:9). Christ is



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the ultimate picture of His love for all (Eph. 3:18; Jn. 1:14; 3:16); therefore, let His limitless love flow through you. Be holy, complete in your love for others, just as He is holy, complete in His love for all (Lev. 11:44).