

The background of the title is a painting depicting a man and a woman in chains, viewed through a grid of prison bars. The man, on the left, has a grey beard and is wearing a blue tunic. The woman, on the right, has long brown hair and is wearing a red and orange tunic. Both are looking down with somber expressions. The painting is rendered in a style reminiscent of classical religious art, with visible brushstrokes and a warm, somewhat muted color palette. The black grid of the prison bars is superimposed over the painting, creating a sense of confinement and restriction.

FREEDOM
FROM THE
TWO PRISONS
OF
OFFENCE

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Introduction

There are many believers wondering why they cannot move forward in their lives. They lie in bed in torment and continually worry about what other people are saying and doing.

You might have a powerful calling on your life and it seems you cannot enter in. The enemy knows about these prisons and desires for you live as a captive for the rest of your life.

This could be because they are on one of two prisons of offence. They both revolve around unforgiveness.

Jesus specifically warns us about two spiritual prisons.

In this message we will look at;

How do we land up in prison?

What is a prison how do we know we are in prison?

Who puts us there?

What is the purpose of these two prisons?

How do we get out of prison?

How to avoid being a captive and walking in freedom.

Levels of punishment

Collins dictionary defines prison as, any place of confinement or seeming confinement.

In each prison there are different levels of punishment, from confinement, to solitary confinement, to torment.

Confinement: we cannot move into the place we are called to and do, although we can move around we cannot move forward.

Paying debt off: We have to stay in confinement until we have paid for something.

Time: We lose time as prison takes time and in that time you cannot really move ahead. We kind of think how long will it still take?

What is the hold up? While we are in prison satan will come and accuse the Lord and say, "he has let you down, God doesn't love you etc. etc.

Torment: This is the most severe, when we are handed over to tormentors, these tormentors are demons, who operate within the bounds of the prison we have been placed in they are allowed to torment us up to certain level.

Prisoner: Is a person deprived of liberty and kept in prison or some other form of custody as a punishment for a crime, while awaiting trial, or for some other reason.

2 a person confined by any of various restraints: *we are all prisoners of time.* (Collins dictionary)

The two types spiritual prisons that Jesus warns about.

Prison #1: The prison of our adversaries

When others bring a case against us – when they refuse to walk in love.

Each person who takes their brother to court in a matter where there is a case, then those they taken the case against will be found guilty and put into prison until they have paid the last penny.

Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.²⁵ Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. ²⁶ Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.

Matthew 5:23-26

The court case:

We do something wrong in the site of our brother/sister who now takes offence and then refuses to forgive us.

They want judgement and punishment and keep the offence in their heart.

They bring this to the judge, who is God. This court case happens over a period of time.

John 20:22-23 **And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If**

you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they are retained.”

The judge then looks at the case and judges us according to the accusation – based on His word. When He finds us guilty, He judges and hands us over to the officer who are the angels who place us in prison.

Types of punishment:

Time – delays

Finances – lack and poverty

Restraint on breakthroughs – we just can't seem to get through into breakthrough no matter what

How long will the imprisonment last? Until they forgive us or we have gone to them to reconcile with them.

Prison #2: The prison of torment

Matt 18:22-35 Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. ²³ Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵ But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. ²⁶ The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ ²⁷ Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

²⁸ “But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took *him* by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’ ²⁹ So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ ³⁰ And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. ³¹ So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. ³² Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. ³³ Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’ ³⁴ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.

³⁵ “So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”

The court case:

We refuse to forgive and want justice and retribution for our suffering.

We bring this to the judge who is God – this is a process of time.

He judges the case and finds both guilty -

The judge then looks at the case and judges us according to the accusation – based on His word. When He finds us guilty, He judges and then hands us over to the tormentors, who are the demons.

Types of punishment:

Time – delays

Restraint on breakthroughs – we can't come through into breakthrough

Torment of sickness – many sicknesses, like cancer and arthritis are rooted in unforgiveness and bitterness

Torment of poverty – We are no open to the spirits of lack and poverty

Other torments – various other torments like fear, anger, bitterness will be allowed to torment our soul's day and night.

Eternal hell – the worst punishment of all, eternal suffering in hell for not forgiving others.

How do we get out of these prisons?

If we want mercy then we should sow mercy – Matthew 5:7 **Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.**

We can get out of both prisons by walking in love – love forgives and is humble.

Owe no man anything but love – this is the main debt we owe. If we pay debt back to all men, then we will be free of all judgment.

Prison #1: The prison of our adversaries

This is the prison we go to when our brethren take offence with us and we are aware of it.

If we know or remember in our hearts, that someone has something against us, then we need to go to them or contact them and repent to them. This means that we have hurt them in some way and they want us to pay for this.

They should either confront us or forgive us, if they don't we now have a court case in the spirit.

The spirit of humility and reconciliation

Before we even go to them we need to confess these accusations before the Lord and ask for His forgiveness for hurting and not loving our brother. Be specific when confessing your sins.

We need to reconcile with them which means, to change the mind of anyone, to reconcile, **to renew friendship** with one (Strong's concordance)

Our focus here should be reconciliation as this is one of our main ministries as believers (See 2 Corinthians 5:18). If we are like Christ we will always have a heart of reconciliation.

We need to ask the Lord to show us what they are offended about. We need to address this through a humble apology and repentance. 1 Corinthians 6:1-11.

We need to ask Him for a humble broken heart for the things we did that offended them and hurt them and caused them to go to the jail of torment.

The word says **agree** with your adversary quickly while you are on the way with them. In this case the enemy has turned our brother into our adversary.

They now stand as our accuser before His throne.

Ask them for their forgiveness. After your repentance, ask them, "do you forgive me for this?" If they don't say yes, then you know they haven't.

You can't force this. You need to follow up in prayer, surrendering them into His blood and cross.

The Lord's overall objective is reconciliation, not just getting out of jail but to win them over so you can walk in unity in love.

It will help if you write down what they are offended about and write a letter of repentance to them. Pray over it and make sure it is done in the spirit of brokenness and love to seem the restored as your friend in Christ.

When we go to them in the right way three things happen –

First - we are released from prison (paying off our debt) because we have obeyed His commandments. We owe them love, the love that never fails. We have been forgiven and washed by His blood.

Second - if they forgive us then they are released from the judgement of the prison of tormentors.

Third - we are now able to sow our seed(gift) and reap a harvest which releases a blessing on the seed and offering we are bringing to the altar in heaven. what kind of harvest are we reaping if we bring our tithes and offerings when others are offended with us?

Father will not receive these offerings as we first must obey His words then sow the seed. So this prison has a serious consequence on our finances and can block our finances from flowing. If we are sowing, while we are in prison, then the seed won't be able to come up.

The reason they are not forgiving us is because they are not mature in His love. Unforgiveness in their hearts is looking for justice of the carnal mind, and not heavens justice which is forgiveness.

They want you to pay for the hurt that you have caused them. Therefore, they bring a case/complaint against you in heavens court. When this happens we are handed over to the officer who puts us in prison.

The real problem now is double prison sentence, both for you and those who put you in prison. Those who accuse and judge you go to a far worse prison, the prison of torment.

This judgement is eternal if they don't forgive from heart. as Matt 6:14-15

“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses”

This means those who die while in the prison of their own unforgiveness will go to hell. As our salvation is based on us being forgiven. This is why those in unforgiveness get all sorts of torments – sickness – arthritis, cancer etc.

These torments are meant to wake us up and help us to turn to the Lord for help. These torments are Gods mercy to save us from going to hell.

What happens if they don't forgive us, are we free?

First thing we need to do is know that the case is in heaven and our Father is in charge of the process. We need to confess these sins not only to the person we have hurt but also before our Father in the heavenly courtroom. When we have obeyed Matt 5:23-26, then we are free.

If our brother still won't forgive us, then they will stay in torment and we will be released because we have obeyed the word of the Lord.

We need to continue to pray that our brother will forgive us, as they are now on the way to hell. Keep them surrendered in His blood and cross so that His blood can speak into their hearts together with the power of the cross.

Prison #2: The prison of torment

The prison we go to when we won't forgive others from our heart.

Galatians 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

What do you do when a brother or sister hurts you? You have two godly choices you either forgive them from your heart, or you go and confront them according to Matthew 18:15-17. Go alone first, do not tell others about the sin, as this is slander.

“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ ¹⁷ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

We need the wisdom of when to do what? Some things need to be confronted and some things need to just be forgiven. I believe people who sin against us and are causing us real pain; that are repeated over and over, need to be confronted in love and truth.

Also the sins that are clearly spelt out in the word. We also need to this is humility and love, with the objective is restoration.

If you deal with the sin through forgiveness, then you will go to prison and be tormented by the devil. When you die you will go to hell if you have unforgiveness in your heart towards other's.

As He says if we don't forgive others from our hearts, then He won't forgive us. This means we lose our salvation which is based on His forgiveness. Without His forgiveness of our sins, we will go to hell.

This is why many towards the end of their lives go through long periods of protracted suffering through some form of sickness. The sickness is the torment from the devil. Our Father allows this suffering in order to wake the person up and bring them to repentance so they are ready to die and go to heaven.

Our Father does not desire to see any of His children torment with sickness, but will allow it to wake us up when we so full of pride and hardness of heart.

Why would a loving Father put us in such places?

Both prisons are there to teach us something – the consequences of not walking in His love and unforgiveness.

Second prison – the prison of torment:

This is the most serious prison and is much more severe than the first one. As the ultimate consequence of this prison is eternal separation and punishment in hell.

And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.

³⁵ “So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.” Matthew 18:34-35

“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Matthew 6:14-15

The prison of our adversaries

Because He loves us and our brother He will place us here. To teach us walk in humility helping others be set free from hell. As we can see that they are on their way to hell if they don't forgive us. Our punishment is temporary and can be very painful to us, but not nearly

as painful as the prison of torment which is a gate to eternal hell.

This is Fathers mercy on those who are offended with us. This process calls us to go to them and humble ourselves before them making it easier for them to forgive us and get out of prison and hell.

This command of love causes us to get our brother out of jail by making it easier for them to forgive us.

Our obedience and love will set others free from the jail or torment and eternal suffering in hell.

To do this properly with a heart of brokenness is essential to see the true fruit of forgives from our offended brother. We need the grace of godly sorrow for causing them pain through our own selfishness.

“For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death” 2 Corinthians 7:10

We need to be broken with the realisation that we could be the reason that a precious soul whom Jesus died for ends up in prion of torment and eventually in eternal hell.

This is the spirit of Elijah which causes us to true have a penitent heart for our sins.

He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” Luke 1:17

We have keys to set our brother free, so when we go to them we need to see this as Father’s love extended to them though us.

When we do this in obedience and love for them, He sets us free and we can continue into breakthrough in our lives unhindered by this type of imprisonment and constraint in our lives.

When we judge others:

Matthew 7:1-2 **“Judge not, that you be not judged. ² For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you”**

When we judge and accuse the following happens...

We get judgement measured out the same way we judge. This means others will judge and accuse us, putting us into prison. Secondly we are thrown into prison.

He came to set the captives free

Isaiah 61:1-2 **“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, Because the Lord has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to *those who are bound*; ² To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn”**

There are many prisons that the enemy has set up for us and places people in – the prison of fear, lust, pride etc. Yet the two prisons we have now looked at is the prison our Father sends us to.

Jesus came with the keys of the Kingdom to set us free from prison. He proclaimed liberty, through the message that He spoke. Love was His message; this is the key to take us out of prison.

He showed us that, we need to sow mercy to receive mercy. For every person we judge and wont forgive there are ten people behind us who will do the same to us. So we have been completely imprisoned, while we are imprisoning others.

We are truly reaping what we have sown.

The judgement we have sown is the judgment we are reaping through others who are so willing to judge us.

There is powerful line in a song by Kevin Prosch...He sings;

***“The mercy we don’t give is the mercy we
don’t get”***

Also, even if we are walking in forgiveness towards others, we can still be put in prison by those around us who refuse to forgive us, and bring an accusation against us. To walk free from these two prisons, we need to walk in love – the love for forgiving others and the love that repents to others for hurting them in order to get reconciled with them.

Father wants to see us walking in love. When we are we are truly free.

Repenting to others even though they are wrong by not forgiving us, it takes true humility and death to the pride of self. As we humble ourselves before our brother then God will lift us up out of prison into the freedom He desires for us.

It is interesting to note that the ones who are able to help us the most, our brothers, are also able to hinder us the most.

Satan is the one laughing as he gets Christians to do his job, which is bringing accusation against the brethren. Satan has been cast out of heaven yet he still has access through the Christians who daily accuse one another before the throne of God.

We are all seated in heavenly places. We either accuse or love each other. The reason he does this is so he can torment the Christians in the prison number two. The first prison is what stops us as His children from entering into His promises for our lives. He requires obedience to all His commands including Matthew 5- 7 the sermon on the mount which is the Kingdom Constitution.

Going to prison can take a short time, from the time of the offence to the sentencing. We can be free from prison one day and a week later we find we are in prison.

We need to be aware of the enemy's tactics to make us captive. So we should always carefully pray about our own offences and offences of our own brothers.

The key to walking free from captivity is walking in love and humility. When we do we will walk in the ministry of reconciliation towards our brethren at all times.

2 Corinthians 5:18-19 **Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.**

The Sea of Forgetfulness

When we forgive we need to forgive just like the Lord does.

He forgives from His heart and He also forgets our sin. We need to do both of these. If we can't then we can ask Him for the grace to do so.

For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;

As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. Palm 103:11-12

He removes our sins completely and then He says He will remember them no more....

“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,”

then He adds, “Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” Hebrews 10:16-17

When we confess our sins, He actually throws them in the sea where He chooses to forget them.

If you come back to the Lord five minutes after you have confessed your sin, and ask Him about it. He will say He remembers it no more.

He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea. Micah 7:19

Isn't this such an awesome promise?

That God in His great mercy has chosen to forgive and forget all our sins. This means He holds no account of your confessed sins.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness
1 John 1:9

Forgiving from the heart just like God

Now that He has forgiven us and forgotten our sins by placing in the sea of forgetfulness we should do the same.

This is always a good test to see if you have forgiven someone or not. If you keep remembering their sin and even discussing it with others, then you are not free and are still in unforgiveness.

You need to forget it just like God did for you.

We always pray, Father, forgive us our sins as we forgive others their sins.

This means we must cast others sins into the sea of forgetfulness just like our Abba Father does.

We can actually ask Him to delete it from our minds just like you would delete something from your computer's hard drive.

Prayer:

Father please show me if there is any unforgiveness in my heart towards any one, show me if I have forgiven from my heart. Have I forgotten the offence?

Show me if there are any of my brethren who are offended with me? Help to be reconciled with them in Jesus name. Help me to come out of prison and be set free to walk into breakthrough and all your promises for me. Amen.

Example prayer for forgiveness:

Father I choose today to forgive, "person's name" for hurting me and sinning against me. By your power and grace I forgive "person's name" and release them into your blood now.

I trust that you will save and deliver them.

Please heal my heart, my mind and emotions from any wounding.

I now choose forget it and I cast it in the sea of forgetfulness. Never to return and collect the memory of their sin. Father please remove this memory from my mind completely.

Father I now release your love over "person's name" and bless them with your love and grace. May they be set free and live with you in heaven.

In Jesus Name. Amen