

The Olive Branch Part 3

Gen 8:1 But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided.

(vv. 6-9) At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made ⁷ and sent forth a raven. It went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. ⁸ Then he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground. ⁹ But the dove found no place to set her foot, and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth.

(vv. 10-12) He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark. ¹¹ And the dove came back to him in the evening, and behold, in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth.

- **The Dove** is a beautiful symbol of the Spirit of God in its purity and in its ministry of peace. The first time we see a dove in Scripture is in Genesis 8.
- **The Raven** represented the flesh; there was plenty for the raven to eat outside the ark so it went too and fro until the waters were dried up.

The dove would not defile itself on the decayed carcasses, so it came back to the ark. The second time the dove was released, it returned with an olive leaf, a symbol of peace. The third time, the dove did not return it made its abode on a reborn earth.

The Raven and the Dove

1) The Raven

We are not sure why he sent a raven on a scouting mission. But we are being told something here that goes far beyond a quick glance at this narrative.

a) What do we know about Ravens?

- i) They have very keen eyes and strong wings, this may explain why the first bird Noah sent from the ark was a raven (Gen. 8:7).
- ii) Ravens are scavenger birds that will eat almost anything. It would be able to survive away from the boat by eating dead animals floating on the water.
- iii) The **raven** is listed in Lev 11:15 as an unclean bird.
- iv) Ravens can be Vicious.

These birds were also known for their practice of pecking out the eyes of a body—a quick way to determine whether their meal was actually dead (Prov. 30:17).

v) The Raven "... went forth to and fro..." (Genesis 8:7) finding a resting-place in the waters of judgment and destruction.

b) The Raven and Our Flesh

- i) Unsettled. This Raven kept going to and fro. One moment on the ark where everyone was onboard with God's Grace. Submitting to God's word. The next moment it is searching for its own provisions. Unrest is a characteristic of the Flesh.
- ii) Self-sufficient. Ravens are omnivores. They specialize in survival. Ravens or Carrion-Crows are everywhere in the world.
- iii) Unclean. If you were to throw a raven or a carrion-crow into the air, it would be looking for something foul which it could feed upon. It takes pleasure in death, gets excited when things are dying. Ravens will eat seeds and fruits, but given the choice it going to dine on rotten stuff.

There is lot of raven-ness in all of us. We prefer to live life our way. We are drawn to the negative things in life. And, we have a tendency to be unsettled. Torn between resting and waiting on God or setting off to survive on our own.

2) The Dove

What do we know about Doves?

a) In Nature:

- i) They are powerful and swift in flight but not very sturdy on foot.
- ii) For this reason, they seek out peaceful, quiet, and level ground when lighting on the earth.
- iii) Doves do not touch dead or decaying flesh.

b) In the Bible:

- i) The dove is a symbol of redemption and forgiveness.

There was a very elaborate system of animal sacrifices detailed in the book of Leviticus. A bull, lamb was usually consumed by fire on an altar to atone for the sins of the people.

The larger animals were often expensive. So, if a person could not afford a large animal God made provision for an inexpensive dove to be accepted. So, regarding the burnt offerings for sin: The dove was an acceptable substitute for a lamb.

Understand that the Dove was a Redemptive bird which was sent out looking for a place pure place to dwell.

- ii) The dove was the symbol of escape and safety.

- (1) Under the old covenant, when a person had been diagnosed with leprosy, that person was then considered unclean. When the leprous person was healed there was a cleansing ceremony that involved 2 doves.
 - (2) The “leprous” house was cleansed by the sprinkling of the blood (mixed with water) of one bird and by the live release of the second bird (Lev 14:52–53). One died and the other was set free!
- iii) The dove was also a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 3:16 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him.

An olive leaf in the beak of a dove? That was something to be excited about! The bird brought more than a piece of a tree; it brought hope.

Proof that living life God’s way (the Spirit’s way) brings a bright future!

Don’t we love the olive leaves of life? These are signs of hope!

The Holy Spirit and Peace through Forgiveness

Forgiving Self

- 1) Before you can come to peace with God and others you must find a peace within.
 - a) Jesus said in Mark 7:21-23 “... from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”
 - b) Remember there is a little bit of raven-ness inside all of us! And we often hate ourselves for our “raven ways.”
- 2) Have you ever noticed that Jesus was not shocked or appalled at the evidence of sin in the life of sinners?

John 8, the woman caught in the act of adultery.

vv. 7-11, “... Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” ⁸ And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. ⁹ But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. ¹⁰ Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” ¹¹ She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”

- a) If Jesus does not condemn you, why would you not forgive yourself?
 - b) **Romans 8:1,2 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death”**
- 3) It's time to give the Spirit of God some new ground in your heart for him to light upon.
- a) Let the wind of God blow back the dark decaying waters of your past failure!
 - b) Stop your Raven Ways and give it up to God!

Forgiving Others

Gen 8:9NCV “The dove could not find a place to land because water still covered the earth...”

- 1) God wants to come down and bring peace, but our hearts remain flooded with judgment, unforgiveness, and sometimes retaliation.
- Stop feeding on carrion of past grievances
- i) You don't need that kind of energy
 - ii) These are empty spiritual calories... they will not produce life

2) 9 Steps toward Forgiveness

You've been hurt, wronged, treated unfairly, or even abused. The natural response is to seek revenge or want to hurt the person back. But Jesus was radical when he talked to us about how we are to respond to someone who offends or hurts us.

(By the way, modern psychology has finally caught up to the benefits of choosing to forgive)

Here are 9 reasons why forgiveness is so important?

Forgiveness...

- i) Is a choice. You can choose to stay stuck and hold on to anger, bitterness, resentment or you can choose to move forward by letting go.
- ii) Is not about what people deserve. None of us deserves to be forgiven yet God forgives us.
- iii) Does not mean you condone what a person did. It means the opposite. You acknowledge the hurt and still choose to forgive which is why it is so powerful.
- iv) Is an individual act. It takes two to reconcile but one to choose the route of forgiveness.

- v) Is commanded by Christ, not an option. Mt 6:14,15 “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”
- vi) Improves one’s physical health. By lowering blood pressure and stress and making you a reduced risk for substance abuse and depression.
- vii) Opens the door to reconciliation. You can’t force someone to reconcile because you don’t have control over his/her actions but you can open the door to the possibility by beginning with forgiveness.
- viii) Is on-going. “Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” ²² Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times”. Matthew 18:21-22
- ix) Forgiveness allows the Spirit to operate in our hearts. Forgiveness goes against our natural instincts to get revenge or even the score.

“Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” ²⁰ To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Romans 12:19-21