

HOW DO WE FORGIVE?
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THESIS: To show how we can forgive from the heart our fellow man.

INTRODUCTION

- * There was once a young man who learned the true meaning of extending forgiveness.
 - A. This young man was betrayed by his own family.
 - B. This young man was imprisoned because of false statements made against him.
 - C. This young man was forgotten by those he helped.
 - D. And when in a position to take revenge upon those who had so terribly mistreated him, he forgave them.
 - E. This young man's name was Joseph.
- * **Genesis 45:1-15** tells how he forgave his brothers.

I. PRINCIPLES

- A. **Matthew 18:21-35 -- Parable of unforgiving servant**
 - 1. Background to Parable (**vv. 21-22**)
 - a. Peter's question to Jesus as to how often forgiveness should be extended to a brother -- until seven times?
 - b. Jesus' reply -- seventy times seven (i.e. unlimited).
 - c. The design of this parable is to show that upon our willingness to forgive others hangs the divine forgiveness of our sins (**v. 35**)
 - 2. Parable narrative (**vv. 23-34**)
 - a. "Therefore" -- the kingdom of heaven IS made up of forgiving people.
 - b. The "king" is God; settling of accounts is God's judgment.
 - c. The "servant" is the sinner (all mankind).
 - d. The unpayable "debt" is all our sins (unpayable).
 - His debt of 10,000 talents is an enormous sum even today's money (\$10,000,000).
 - There were only 3000 talents of gold in the temple (1 Ch. 29:4-7).
 - A laborer's daily wage in NT Palestine was one shilling (17 cents).
 - e. The servant begs for mercy, claiming he will repay ALL.
 - This claim shows his complete lack of comprehending his own debt.
 - f. The King, moved by compassion, forgives all the debt.
 - This term is a strong expression suggesting inward pain as seeing another's suffering with a desire to relieve.
 - Forgive means to send away -- they are not earned off.
 - g. The "fellow servant" is one who sins against his brother.
 - His debt of 100 denari (\$17) is insignificant compared to the other debt.
 - The first servant violently demands repayment, perhaps not believing his debt was truly forgiven.
 - His lack of compassion demonstrates how ungrateful he was of his own forgiveness.

- Other servants witness the conduct of the unforgiving servant and report it to the King.
- h. The King calls the servant to account; he rebuked him and delivered him to the "torturers" until he should pay.
 - The master feels that this offense is worse than the original indebtedness.
 - He is now called "wicked servant".
 - Since he could not repay the debt, he would be punished remainder of his life.
- i. Jesus' application (**v. 35**)
 - Upon our willingness to forgive hangs the divine forgiveness of our sins.
 - This forgiveness must be real ("from the heart"), not a ritual.

B. *Matthew 6:9-15 -- Model prayer*

1. "Forgive us our debts" (**v. 12a**)
2. "As we forgive our debtors" (**v. 12b**)
3. Significant that Jesus offers further commentary (**vv. 14-15**) only about forgiveness.
4. This underscores the importance of forgiveness.

C. *Forgiveness must be extended, but HOW?*

1. Especially when it is someone close to us ("brother" is the word Peter used).
 - a. Fellow Christian
 - b. Family member -- spouse, parent, child
 - c. Very close friend
 - d. Our own self

II. WHAT CAUSES US TO NOT FORGIVE?

A. *Hatred:*

1. Hatred is one of the strongest emotions God has given us.
2. We must somehow learn to hate what God hates, and love what God loves.
 - a. God ALWAYS hates the sinful acts.
 - b. God NEVER hates the sinner.
3. Hatred of another individual will consume us with revenge.
 - a. Example: Melville's character Ahab in *Moby Dick* lost his leg to the white whale and was consumed with revenge. The point in the end is that Ahab destroys his ship, himself and all those around him in his quest for revenge, while Moby Dick escapes. Hatred destroys.
4. **Matthew 5:43-44** -- Love enemies
 - a. Agape love is a love of the will, not emotions.

B. *Deep Pains:*

1. Pain is what happens to us when we are injured.
2. Emotional pain is perhaps even more injurious to us because once a physical pain is healed, we forget we were ever hurt. But our mental capacity for remembering makes it very difficult to move beyond emotional pain.

3. Sometimes we are hurt so deeply by another that we can't forget what they did to us.
4. It is important that the Bible does not say "forget" -- cutting off a friend, spouse or enemy is not forgiveness, it is forgetfulness.
5. Our duty is to forgive -- to not maintain our resentment towards the offender and to treat them lovingly as if they had not hurt us. To not hold the sin against them any more.
6. **Matthew 7:12** -- Golden rule

C. ***Pride:***

1. Maybe we get the idea, "I'm going to teach them a lesson."
2. Sometimes others make forgiveness harder. "You're not going to forgive them, are you?"
3. These attitudes only hurt us and are usually a result of our own human pride.
4. **Matthew 5:21-24** -- it affects our worship, first be "reconciled" (enemies are now friends).
5. ***Effects of not forgiving:***
 - a. Destroys the relationship with the one we're angry with.
 - b. Shortens our lives.
 - c. Poisons our memories.
 - d. Weakens our relationship with God.
 - e. Affects our feelings of self-worth.

Hatred, deep pain and pride are three things that can keep us from forgiving as we ought...

III. HOW CAN WE LET GO OF THESE FEELINGS? Three ways . . .

A. ***Realize forgiveness is a gift from God.***

1. Disciples of Jesus are all forgiven of their own sins by the grace of God and must forgive others.
 - a. **Ephesians 1:7-8** --
 - b. **Ephesians 2:1-6** --
2. How did Jesus forgive?
 - a. **Luke 23:34** -- Father forgive them . . .
 - b. Example: Wright L. Moody wrote: "I can imagine Jesus saying . . .
 "Go search out the man who put the crown of thorns on My brow. Tell him I will have a crown for him in My kingdom . . . and there will not be a thorn in it."
 "Find the man who smote Me, smote the reed on My head, driving the thorns deeper into my brow, and tell him that I will give him a scepter."
 "Go seek out the poor soldier that drove the spear into My side, and tell him that there is a nearer way to My heart, and you can get there without a sword."
3. How did God forgive the world?
 - a. Look at Calvary!

4. If unforgiveness poisons our heart, the antidote is to see how we've been forgiven by God.
 - a. We must grasp the enormity of what we've been forgiven.
 - b. Remember how much God has forgiven us.
 - c. We will be able to forgive when we appreciate what we've been forgiven; (remember unforgiving servant didn't forgive because he had no appreciation for his own forgiveness).
- B. *Realize forgiveness is the most powerful witness we have of God's grace in our lives.***
1. We live in an unforgiving world -- if we're a forgiving people it will show.
 2. When we forgive those who wrong us, we tell the world "God is alive and at work in my heart."
 3. Unfortunately for some, nursing a grudge has become a deep spiritual problem, hurting their ability to tell of Christ and God's grace. We can't speak of forgiveness if we're not forgiven (and we won't be if we're not forgiving).
 4. Forgiveness is a gift of God, a gift that is to be passed on -- the most powerful testimony we have to the reality of God's grace in our lives.
 5. **John 17:20-23** -- that the world may believe.
- C. *Realize forgiveness is a positive activity, necessary for our own healing.***
1. Forgiveness is not passive resignation to an unpleasant situation:
 - a. "I guess I can live with it"
 - b. "Nothing else I can do but forgive them"
 2. Forgiveness is a positive, joyful activity in which we change from seeing ourselves as victims to seeing ourselves as victors.
 - a. When you forgive you are the victor.
 - b. You will have moved from weakness to strength (more Godly).
 - c. I can only begin to heal emotionally when I let go of all that unhealthy baggage of unforgiveness.
 3. Joseph was the real victor.
 - a. **Genesis 45:8, 15**

I am much more likely to forgive my fellow man when I understand that . . .

- *forgiveness is a gift from God.*

- *forgiveness is the most powerful witness we have of God's grace in our lives.*

- *forgiveness is a positive activity, necessary for our own healing.*

CONCLUSION:

- A. Power of the Scriptures (to transform our minds).
 1. **Luke 6:37** -- Forgive and you will be forgiven.
 2. **Ephesians 4:23** -- Forgiving one another just as God in Christ also forgave you.
 3. **Colossians 3:13** -- Even as Christ forgave you, so you must also do.