

THE WAY OF FORGIVENESS

Matthew 18:21-35

INTRODUCTION:

A. Christians are commanded to have a forgiving spirit toward others.

Corrie ten Boom told of not being able to forget a wrong that had been done to her. She had forgiven the person, but she kept rehashing the incident and so couldn't sleep. Finally Corrie cried out to God for help in putting the problem to rest. "His help came in the form of a kindly Lutheran pastor," Corrie wrote, "to whom I confessed my failure after two sleepless weeks." "Up in the church tower," he said, nodding out the window, "is a bell which is rung by pulling on a rope. But you know what? After the sexton lets go of the rope, the bell keeps on swinging. First ding, then dong. Slower and slower until there's a final dong and it stops. I believe the same thing is true of forgiveness. When we forgive, we take our hand off the rope. But if we've been tugging at our grievances for a long time, we mustn't be surprised if the old angry thoughts keep coming for a while. They're just the ding-dongs of the old bell slowing down." "And so it proved to be. There were a few more midnight reverberations, a couple of dings when the subject came up in my conversations, but the force -- which was my willingness in the matter -- had gone out of them. They came less and less often and at the last stopped altogether: we can trust God not only above our emotions, but also above our thoughts" – (Corrie ten Boom).

B. General Oglethorpe once said to John Wesley, "I never forgive and I never forget." To which Wesley replied, "Then, Sir, I hope you never sin." – (Source unknown)

I. FORGIVENESS (vv. 18-27)

A. The Question of Forgiveness (v. 21)

1. Forgiving involves releasing, dismissing or letting go of something that happens to you as if it never occurred. If someone ask you for forgiveness, the Believer must forgive him or her from the heart (Matt 18:35; Eph 4:32).
2. Forgiving is not simply an act; it is also an attitude. Such an attitude brings freedom from bitterness and hardness.
3. Counting how many times one has to forgive another typifies the mindset of the world.
4. Peter thought seven times of forgiving another was generous, because the Rabbis taught that 3-4 times was sufficient. This reasoning was based upon their interpretation of Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11.

B. The Standard for Forgiveness (v. 22)

Jesus answered Peter's question by stating, "until seventy times seven." This does not mean to forgive 490 times and then stop forgiving. Jesus meant an unlimited number of times. Forgive as many times as necessary.

- "And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him" (Luke 17:4).
- "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Col 3:13).

C. **The Example of Forgiveness** (vv. 23-27)

1. The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant deals with judgment. The King in some ways represented God, while the debtor stands for humanity.
2. The Parable emphasizes how great is the sinner's debt to God and how hopeless are all the sinners promises and attempts to pay by his own good works.
 - "5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;
6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 3:5-6).

D. **According to verse 24, this man was brought before the king to give an account of the large debt that he owed to him – "Ten thousand talents" (valued at several million dollars today).**

1. The man did not have the money and the king reacted (as we do sometime) by commanding that he, his wife and children and all that he had be sold so that the debt could be satisfied – The king had this authority (v. 25).
2. The servant threw himself at the king's feet in total submission. He promised to repay everything. He didn't ask for forgiveness, he asked for more time (v. 26).
3. The king overcame his fierce anger and had compassion for the servant. The king forgave the entire debt. The servant remained employed by the king (v. 27).

II. **FORFEITURE** (vv. 28-30)

A. **The Demand Made** (v. 28)

The forgiven servant found one of his fellowservants and demanded that he repay his debt of one hundred pence (normal wages for a day's work or 100 pennies today), immediately. This same servant was cruel to his fellowservant and laid hands on him and took him by the throat.

B. **The Patience Asked** (v. 29)

The fellowservant asked for more time to repay the debt just as the servant has asked of the king.

C. **Action Taken** (v. 30)

The servant denied his fellowservants request for additional time to repay the debt and cast him in prison until he could pay the debt.

1. The servant was hard and unmerciful. He had no compassion for his fellowservant. He did not care whether or not his fellowservant would be able to continue serving the king. He did not consider his fellowservant as a person.
2. The relatives and/or friends of the fellowservant would have to repay the money or the fellowservant would remain in prison until death.

III. **FORECLOSURE** (vv. 31-35)

A. **The Report Made** (v. 31)

The other fellowservants saw what happened and reported it to the king. The king forgave the servant for a large debt and the servant did not forgive his fellowservant for a very small debt. The servant broke his fellowship with all of his fellowservants.

B. **The Servant Summoned** (vv. 32-33)

1. **“Wicked Servant”** – He was called wicked because he was unforgiving.

The point of the Parable is that God is unimaginable merciful, but He shows no mercy to those who are themselves unmerciful to others.

2. We must have mercy and compassion toward each other.

- “With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love” (Eph 4:2).
- “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you” (Eph 4:32).

C. **The Action Taken** (v. 34)

1. The Lord was angry with the servant and turned him over to the tormentors until his debt could be paid. Since this repayment is impossible, the punishment is everlasting.

2. The servant was forgiven because of his begging and the King's mercy. He did not do anything to deserve it.

- **No works done by a person during or after his lifetime can save him, nor anything done by relatives, friends or neighbors on his behalf can save him. Nothing a person does can satisfy his sin debt. It comes as a free gift of Grace to those who Believe and accept Christ as Savior.**
- **“⁸ For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹ Not of works, lest any man should boast”** (Eph 2:8-9).

D. **The Warning Given** (v. 35)

1. A Christian is to have a forgiving attitude toward others – Forgiveness must come from the heart.

2. Forgiveness cannot be with the lips only or with provisions or conditions.

- “⁸ This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. ⁹ But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt 15:8-9).

3. Forgiving a Sister or Brother in Christ who has gone astray should be a genuine delight for the Believer.

4. Forgiveness means a complete pardon so that no longer is the person considered or treated as guilty.

5. Unlimited forgiveness is evidence that an individual actually has put his faith in Jesus Christ, that he has really and truly accepted the forgiveness and Salvation.
6. “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matt 6:12).
 - **Forgive Graciously! - Forgiving one another keeps the channels of God’s Grace open.**

THOUGHT TO PONDER:

“To have an unforgiving spirit and harbor bitterness only hurts one’s self. Hatred is a poison that destroys the vessel in which it’s kept.” – (Curtis Hutson)

MEMORY VERSES:

“¹⁷ Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

¹⁹ Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (Rom 12:17, 19).

CONCLUSION:

A. “And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses” (Mark 11:25).

B. COME TO THE CROSS

Sinner, come today, Come today, at the cross there is room
Blessed thoughts for everyone, For everyone can come to the cross
Now a living fountain, see, Open there for you and me
For rich and poor, for bond and free
Hallelujah, everyone, Everyone can come to the cross
I say it doesn't matter what you've done, Everyone can come to the cross

C. Romans Road to Salvation (Rom 3:10, 23; 5:8; 10:9, 13)



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Corinth Christian Fellowship
October 11, 2023**

“... the word of our God shall stand for ever” (Isa 40:8).