

Forgiveness Part 2 – God’s Conditional Command To Forgive

- *Matthew 6:12, 14-15*

- **Last week we began the topic of forgiveness & this topic seems to resonate with so many of us b/c it is an issue that effects each & every one of us at some time in our life.**
- **We have all had the moments were we were forced with the decision as to whether to forgive or not, and as we learned last week, it is a choice that we make.**
 - We don’t have to forgive when someone wrongs us,
 - We don’t have to forgive when others hurt us intentionally,
 - We don’t have to forgive when other people don’t deserve it,
 - But if we love God, we will choose to love them anyway b/c Christ forgave us.
- **Now this week, we will shift gears a little bit in this discussion of forgiveness & we will see what the Word of God has to say about forgiving others.**
- **READ SCRIPTURE**
- **As you read throughout God’s Word, there is some language & some words that are difficult to understand. Then you will also find some commands & statements that are quite simple to understand, but very difficult in our human nature to carry out. One such instance is found in the Lord’s Prayer.**
 - Everyone agrees that this is a difficult word from the Lord. It is hard to understand and even harder to apply.
 - What makes this command so hard? It appears that the Lord has drawn something into this prayer that does not belong there.
 - We would understand this petition perfectly if it read, “Forgive us our debts,” and just stopped right there. That would make sense. We all understand that we need to confess our sins and ask for forgiveness.
 - What makes this prayer so frustrating is that Jesus seems to drag in something that doesn’t belong when he adds the phrase “as we forgive our debtors.” It is almost as if God is conditioning our forgiveness with how we forgive others, doesn’t it?
- **For sake of time, I will go ahead & cut to the chase & tell you that is exactly what God is saying. There is no mixed words or hidden meaning here. God means exactly what He says here.**
 - You can practically break this verse down to this – “Unless you forgive, God will not forgive you.”
 - This is not talking about salvation, but Jesus uses some strong language here to show the sincerity of our petition. We must come in true repentance. True repentance will not harbor unforgiveness of others.
 - Charles Spurgeon said, “if you pray the Lord’s Prayer with an unforgiving spirit, you have virtually signed your own ‘death-warrant’.”
 - During one period of his life, John Wesley was a missionary in the American colonies— primarily in the area that would become the state of Georgia. There was a general by the name of Oglethorpe with whom Wesley had some dealings. General Oglethorpe was a great military leader, but he had a reputation as a harsh and brutal man. One day he said to John Wesley, “I never forgive.” To which Wesley replied, “Then, sir, I hope you never sin.”
- **The act of forgiveness is a choice we make, a choice that we make each time someone hurts us.**
 - That choice has nothing to do with my “feelings,” whether or not I want to forgive, or whether I “feel like” forgiving.
 - It is a direct command from God with no special circumstances or no passes. If we love God, we must forgive.

- **When Jesus gave us an example of how to pray, “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,” we are asking God to forgive our sins according to the same standard we have used in forgiving the sins of others.**
 - This little verse changes its meaning for most of us b/c we never paid much attention to one little 2 letter word in this verse, the word “as”.
 - This little prayer asks 3 specific things:
 1. To forgive the debt of sin.
 - When we fall short we need God’s forgiveness.
 2. To forgive the debt of guilt or punishment.
 - We deserve to pay a penalty for our sins & shortcomings & we are asking God to forgive that debt.
 3. To forgive AS we have forgiven others.
 - This is the part where so many of us have prayed & never given much thought to what we were asking.
 - When Jesus says “as,” he is setting up a comparison between the way we forgive and the way God forgives us. This text says that we set the standard and then God follows the standard. We establish the pattern and then God follows that pattern in the way he deals with us. When you pray this prayer you are really saying, “O God, deal with me as I deal with other people. Deal with me as I have dealt with others.”
 - It’s as if we’re praying, “O God, that man hurt me. I am so angry I can’t wait to get even. Deal with me as I have dealt with him.” We set the standard and God follows our lead.
- **To refuse to forgive someone else and then to ask God for forgiveness is a kind of spiritual hypocrisy. You are asking God to give you what you are unwilling to give to someone else. Do you want to be forgiven? Then you must forgive others.**
 - Mark 11:25 – “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.”
 - Luke 17:4 – “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.”
 - Colossians 3:13 – “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.”
 - Stewart Custer wrote in his commentary on Matthew, “This has nothing to do with salvation; it is the daily practice of the believer that is here under discussion. If the believer is going to get hardhearted, the Lord will start collecting debts too.”
 - This verse is not saying if we don’t forgive, we can’t be saved. What it is saying is that if we don’t forgive others, we will not enjoy His fellowship nor have the peace from God which comes from a forgiving spirit.
- **Jesus has just given us the Lord’s Prayer as a pattern for our prayer life & then in vv.14-15, He comes back & hits this area one more time.**
 - Why would He address this again? Why would He call out this one area to address again? Maybe b/c He knew we would try to work our way out of it b/c of our special circumstance. That is why in verses 14-15 he spells it out so clearly that no one can doubt it.
 - Forgiveness in essence requires several things:
 1. We must confess our sins. (I John 1:9; I John 1:8-10)
 2. We must have faith in God to forgive our sins. (Hebrews 11:6)
 3. We must repent of our sin. (Acts 3:19; Luke 17:3-4)
 4. We must forgive those who have wronged us. (Matthew 6:14-15)
- **Someone may ask the question, “So can you be saved & be unforgiving?” Well as absurd as it sounds, you can be.**
 - When a Christian refuses to forgive, you have chosen to hang on to your bitterness and to forfeit your daily walk with the Lord.

- You would rather be angry than enjoy the peace of God.
- You have chosen resentment over peace.
- Your grudges have become more important to you than the daily blessing of God.
- You would rather live with the “hidden torturers” than experience the freedom of forgiveness.
- God has already forgiven your sins 100% by the blood of Jesus Christ. How dare you, then, be unforgiving to someone who hurt you? That’s really the issue. How dare you be unforgiving after what Jesus Christ did for you on the cross?
- **R.T. Kendall said there are 10 consequences to an unforgiving spirit.**
 1. Our fellowship with the Father is blocked.
 2. The Holy Spirit is grieved.
 3. Your prayers will not be answered.
 4. God leaves you alone to face the problems of life in your own power.
 5. The devil gains a foothold through your bitterness.
 6. You force God to become your enemy.
 7. You lose the blessing of God on your life.
 8. You waste time nursing a wounded spirit.
 9. You become enslaved to the people you hate.
 10. You become like the people you refuse to forgive.
- **The heart of the matter is this. We think so much of ourselves that we don’t see ourselves as that “bad” of people, and therefore we don’t appreciate how greatly God has forgiven us.**
 - Have you ever seen those mirrors where one side everything looks so small, but then you flip it over & everything is magnified 10X.
 - That is sort of the way it is when we look at our mistakes against God compared to the sins others have committed against us.
 - If you think you’re not much of a sinner, then the offenses of other people are going to appear in your eyes as big. Don’t talk about repentance unless you are willing to forgive your brothers and sisters. True repentance always starts with a change of mind that leads to a change of heart that leads to a change in the way we view those who have sinned against us.
- **You say, “Well Pastor, I want to forgive. How can I know if I have forgiven someone?”**
 1. Face what they did and forgive them anyway.
 2. Don’t keep bringing it up to them.
 3. Don’t talk about it to others.
 4. Show mercy instead of judgment.
 5. Refuse to speak evil of others.
 6. Choose not to dwell on it.
 7. Pray for them.
 8. Ask God to bless them.
 9. Do not rejoice at their failures.
 10. Be willing to help them when you can.
- **Jesus is telling us that there is a vital link between the way you treat other people and the way God in heaven is going to treat you.**
 - We may think we can hate someone for what they have done & still receive God’s blessing. But if you sin b/c of their sin, why should God bless you?
 - This is why when true Christians withhold forgiveness & harbor bitterness, they have no peace in their life.
 - They are always talking & dwelling on the wrong that has been done.
 - They constantly try to get the sympathy from others.
 - They focus on their wrongs way more than they focus on their own wrong doings.

- Jesus simply commands us to forgive them & move on. You say, “But Pastor, its not that simple!” Sure it is, b/c that is exactly what Jesus did for you.
 - Not one time has God every brought up your wrong when you asked for forgiveness.
 - Not once has God told others about the wrong that you have done.
 - When we asked for forgiveness, the Bible guarantees us that it was granted & has been removed forever, & so it should be with those we forgive.
- **So here is what I want you to do tonight. Evaluate your own life & ask yourself these questions:**
 - Am I holding a grudge against anyone?
 - Do I harbor any bitterness against any person?
 - Am I talking too much about what others have done to me?
 - Have I forgiven those closest to me who have hurt me so deeply?
- **Do you want to be more like Christ? Do you want the love of God to be shown in your life?**
 - You are never more like Jesus than when you forgive those who have sinned against you.
 - You will never enjoy the peace of God & the freedom of God until you learn the freedom of forgiveness.