

“DO I HAVE TO FORGIVE?”
Matthew 18:21,22

Introduction:

1. It has been said there are three kindred spirits of the human heart:
 - a. Giving.
 - b. Forgiving.
 - c. Thanksgiving.

2. Jesus taught the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant” (Matt. 18:21-35).
 - a. He was answering Peter’s question: “How many times do I have to forgive my brother who wrongs me?”
 - b. A king had a servant who owed him ten million dollars.
 - c. When the servant could not pay, the king ordered that the servant and his family be sold into slavery.
 - d. The servant pleaded so fervently for mercy that the king forgave him his entire debt.
 - e. This man who was forgiven such a great amount demanded of a fellow servant that he pay him the thousand dollars he owed.
 - f. When the man could not pay this small amount, he ordered that he and his family be sold into slavery.
 - g. The king was told of this forgiven servant’s unwillingness to forgive another.
 - h. He cancelled his pardon and ordered the unforgiving servant to be delivered to the torturers until he had paid all that he owed.

3. The point Jesus is making is that the Lord has forgiven us much.
 - a. If we are unwilling to forgive others’ lessor offenses, God will not forgive us our greater offenses against Him.
 - b. Jesus said: “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14,15).

4. James Meadows told of a woman who said, “I can’t forgive.” “Then you had better hope you will never sin,” she was told.

Discussion:

I. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF FORGIVENESS?

A. We can understand what it is by understanding what it is not.

- 1. Forgiveness is not simply ignoring the sin against us while holding ill feelings in our hearts.**
- 2. Forgiveness is not simply refusing to pay back in kind.**
- 3. Forgiveness is not putting the offender “on probation.” and then forgiving him if he commits no further offenses.**

B. We can understand what forgiveness is by observing what God does when He forgives.

- 1. When God forgives, He “blots out” our sins (Acts 3:19).**
- 2. When God forgives, He “forgets” (Hebrews 8:12).**
- 3. When God forgives, He treats us as if we had never sinned (Luke 15:20-24).**

C. Let’s note some Bible examples of forgiveness.

- 1. Jacob stole Esau’s blessing but Esau later treated Jacob as if it had never happened (Genesis 33:4-16).**
- 2. Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery, but he forgave them (Genesis 45; 50:14-21).**
- 3. Saul repeatedly tried to kill David but David refused to kill Saul when he had the chance (1 Samuel 24).**

D. Wendell Winkler suggested we take the “Have I really forgiven my brother?” test (Heart Diseases and Their Cure, p. 5).

- 1. Do I rejoice when I hear my enemy has had misfortune?**
- 2. Do I purposely avoid being in his presence?**
- 3. Do I continue to brood upon the wrong he has done me?**
- 4. Would I help him if he were in need and I was able to?**

II. WHY SHOULD I FORGIVE OTHERS?

- A. The Lord commanded us to forgive (Ephesians 4:32).**
- B. The example of Christ requires us to forgive.**
 - 1. We must follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21).**
 - 2. He prayed for the forgiveness of those who killed Him (Luke 23:34).**
- C. We must forgive others in order to be forgiven by God (Matthew 6:14,15).**
 - 1. The most expensive thing in the world is an unforgiving spirit.**
 - 2. If one does not forgive, he has “sold” his hope of Heaven.**
 - 3. James said: “For judgment is without mercy to the one who has showed no mercy” (James 2:13).**

III. WHEN SHOULD WE FORGIVE?

- A. Two men, brothers-in-law, lived in the same house, but had not spoken to one another for twenty years.**
 - 1. Some trivial argument had poisoned their hearts.**
 - 2. A visiting preacher conducting a Gospel meeting for the congregation both attended faithfully reconciled them.**
- B. We do not know when death may come and it will be too late.**
 - 1. William Thackery and Charles Dickens were literary rivals in England in the mid-1800’s.**
 - 2. By chance they ran into one another one night in London.**
 - 3. Thackery reached out his hand to Dickens who grasped it.**
 - 4. They parted as friends that night.**
 - 5. A few days later, Thackery died.**
- C. James Meadows told me of a small church whose two main leaders “hate one another.”**

IV. HOW CAN WE LEARN TO FORGIVE?

- A. Remember that harboring ill-will and hatred is harmful.
 - 1. B. B. Baxter told of meeting a blind business executive on an airplane.
 - 2. The blind man said a competitor had hired a thug to throw acid in his eyes which blinded him.
 - 3. He knew who was behind it but could not prove it in court.
 - 4. He said he had ill will and hatred in his heart for years before he realized he was only hurting himself by his bitterness.
- B. Remember how much God in Christ has forgiven us (Eph. 4:32).

V. HOW OFTEN MUST WE FORGIVE?

- A. Peter asked: “How often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”
 - 1. Jesus replied: “Up to seventy times seven.”
 - 2. He did not mean just 490 times but an indefinite number of times.
- B. As many times as a brother repents, we are obligated to forgive.

“Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him” (Luke 17:3,4).

Conclusion:

- 1. God wants to forgive us of our sins (2 Peter 3:9; Luke 15:21-24).
- 2. God’s forgiveness is conditioned upon our repentance (Acts 2:38; 8:22).
- 3. Jesus prayed for the Father to forgive those who crucified Him; this was fulfilled on Pentecost (Acts 2:23,36-41).

