

FORGIVENESS

Matthew 6:9-15:

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father, which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

INTRODUCTION

1. Forgiveness is one of the Tenderest words in our language.
 - A. Alexander Pope: "To err is human, to forgive is divine."
 - (1) Forgiveness is the very heart of the gospel.
2. All men sin and thus have need of forgiveness.
 - A. Murder, Robbery, Adultery, Drunkenness, Sullenness, Vindictiveness, Peevishness, Jealousy.
 - B. Sins of social attitude.
 - C. Sins of neglect.
 - (1) The example of two sinners:
 - (a) The Prodigal Son - Guilty of sins of passion, adultery, etc.
 - (b) The Elder Brother - Sullen, envious, bitter, unforgiving.
 1. He was perhaps in a worse condition than the prodigal.
 - D. Some sins are against our fellowman - all sin is against God.
 - (1) We must obtain forgiveness and be willing to give the same.
3. The difference between forgiveness and pardon.
 - A. (1) To pardon - is to free one from punishment.
(2) To forgive - is to free one from resentment and desire of revenge.
 - B. (1) Pardon - has reference to consequences.
(2) Forgiveness - has reference to feelings.
 - C. (1) God both pardons and forgives.
 - (a) The pardoned sinner is exempted from punishment.
 - (b) The forgiven sinner is restored to divine favor.
 - D. (1) Pardon is an act of a superior with the right to punish.
(2) Forgiveness is the privilege of the humblest person.

I. THERE ARE AT LEAST FOUR REASONS WHY WE MUST FORGIVE:

1. God commands it.
 - A. Mark 11:25-26 - "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. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in Heaven forgive your trespasses."

2. Because Christ set the example of forgiveness.

A. Luke 23:34 - "And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.' And they parted his raiment, and cast lots."

(1) We have a command to follow His example.

3. In the third place: We should forgive because we have been forgiven.

A. Eph. 4:32 - "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

4. Fourthly: We are to forgive in order to receive forgiveness.

A. Matthew 6:14-15 - "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will not forgive your trespasses."

II. THERE ARE FOUR BASIC QUESTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED IN FORGIVENESS:

1. How often must we forgive another?

A. Matthew 18:21-22 - "Then came Peter to Him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times: but, until seventy times seven."

(1) Forgiveness knows no limits - love is infinite.

2. Secondly, Should we forgive one who will not repent?

A. The right attitude on our part will cause a person to repent most of the time.

(1) Romans 12:17-21 - "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

(2) Romans 2:4 - "Knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance."

NOTE: God cannot forgive one who will not repent - neither can we.

3. In the third place, To what extent and manner should we forgive?

A. From the depths of One's Heart.

(1) Matthew 18:35 - "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if he from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

B. Some people's statements show that they haven't really forgiven:

(1) "I'll forgive you but from now on I'll have nothing to do with you."

(2) "I'll forgive you but I'll not forget."

(3) "One thing is certain - I can't forgive him."

(a) Just suppose God took that attitude toward each of us.

4. Finally, Upon whom does responsibility for forgiveness lie?

A. Upon the Offender.

(1) Matthew 5:23-24 - "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

B. Upon the Offended.

(1) Matthew 18:15-17 - "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

C. Too many people want to shift the blame.

(1) Both parties generally guilty to a degree. We need to examine our thoughts, motives, and our acts.

III. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF EXCELLENT EXAMPLES OF FORGIVENESS TO FOLLOW IN THE BIBLE:

1. Joseph - As He forgave His brethren (Genesis 50).
2. David - Who spared Saul - God's anointed (I Sam. 24).
3. Stephen - First Christian martyr (Acts 7).
4. Jesus - To those who crucified Him (Luke 23).
5. Father of the Prodigal Son.

IV. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF REASONS WHY FORGIVENESS IS NOT ALWAYS EASY.

1. In the first place, "Because of the effect that sin has on the one who must forgive.

A. Some Examples:

- (1) Some sheik who has seduced your daughter.
- (2) A marriage partner who is unfaithful to the marriage vows. (Hosea forgave Gomer)
- (3) Someone who slanders your good name.

(a) Shakespeare has Iago to say in Othello:

"He who steals my purse steals trash;
Tis something, nothing, t'was mine,,
Tis his, and has been slave to thousands.

But he that filches from me my good name,
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed."

2. Secondly, Because of the experience the man who is forgiven must pass.

A. It is hard for a man with pride to ask for forgiveness.

- B. One who has not suffered the humiliation of asking another for forgiveness for sin cannot understand.

V. THE CROSS OF CHRIST IS AT THE VERY CENTER OF FORGIVENESS.

- 1. Time does not erase sin - Neither does self-justification.

- A. Do not blame others for our own sins.
- B. Sin must be forgiven and on God's terms.

"Dear Lord and Father of mankind
Forgive our foolish ways;
Reclothe us in our rightful mind,
In purer lives; without a word
Rise up and follow thee."

- 2. Christ stands as our great Intercessor.

- A. Romans 8:1, 35-39
- B. Heb. 4:14-16 - "Tempted in all points like as we ..."
Heb. 10:19-22 - "Come boldly into His presence"
- C. I John 1:6-10
- D. I John 2:1 - "Advocate with the Father . . ."

(1) Heb. 10:17