

## Miscellaneous

### ***Forgiving Others from the Heart***

March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Text - Matthew 18:21-35

#### All of us have struggled with unforgiveness

- Some have occasional bouts
- Some struggle on an ongoing basis
- I had a serious bout before becoming a Christian
- It wasn't until after I came to the Lord that...
  - I realized it wasn't ok
  - I realized it was possible to forgive someone *from the heart* even without them ever acknowledging any wrong doing or asking to be forgiven

#### Jesus' first disciples struggled with unforgiveness as well

- **Matthew 18:10-14 (ESV) - The Heart**  
<sup>10</sup> "See that you do not despise one of these *little ones* (believers caught in sin). For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>11</sup> <sup>12</sup> What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? <sup>13</sup> And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. <sup>14</sup> So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.
- **Matthew 18:15-17 (ESV) - The Process**  
<sup>15</sup> "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. <sup>16</sup> But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup> If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.
- **Matthew 18:21-22 (ESV) - The Grace**  
<sup>21</sup> Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" <sup>22</sup> Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.

- **Matthew 18:23-35 (ESV) - The Power**

Four amazing truths that should empower us to forgive others from the heart

- 1) The debt we owe God because of our sin is absolutely unpayable
  - a. The unforgiving servant owed the king a BIG debt
    - i. **Matthew 18:23-25 (ESV)**  
<sup>23</sup> "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. <sup>24</sup> When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him *ten thousand talents*. <sup>25</sup> And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made.
      1. 1 talent = 6,000 drachmas = 20 years' wages for a laborer thus 10,000 talents = 200,000 years wages for a laborer
      2. Put another way, a modern laborer earning \$15 per hour for 2,000 hours would earn \$30,000 per year. Thus one talent which is equal to 20 years' wages for a laborer would be the equivalent of \$600,000 today. That means 10,000 talents would be the equivalent of \$6 billion today, a completely unpayable debt for most people including the servant
    - b. But the debt we owe God is FAR bigger
      - i. **Romans 3:23 (NIV)**  
<sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
      - ii. **Romans 6:23 (NIV)**  
<sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death,...
- 2) God is willing to completely pardon our unpayable debt if we'll repent of our sins and put our trust in Jesus
  - a. Knowing the unforgiving servant could *never pay* the debt that he owed, the king not only had mercy on him, *but he let him completely off the hook.*

- i. **Matthew 18:26-27 (ESV)**  
<sup>26</sup> So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.'  
<sup>27</sup> And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.
  - b. God did the exact same thing for us, only a FAR GRANDER SCALE and at a FAR GREATER COST to Himself
  - c. **Romans 10:9 (NIV)**  
<sup>9</sup> That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.
  - d. **Romans 5:8 (NIV)**  
<sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
  - e. **1 John 4:10 (ESV)**  
<sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.
  - f. **Romans 8:1 (NIV)**  
<sup>1</sup> Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,
  - g. **Psalms 103:12 (ESV)**  
<sup>12</sup> as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

- 3) In light of the amazing grace God has shown us, He expects that we will extend the same amazing grace to others
- a. Despite the amazing grace the king had shown him, the unforgiving servant was unwilling to extend that grace to others.
    - i. **Matthew 18:28-30 (ESV)**  
<sup>28</sup> But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.'  
<sup>29</sup> So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.'  
<sup>30</sup> He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt.

1. 100 denarii = 20 weeks common labor = \$12,000 today
  - b. God expects much more from us
    - i. **Romans 12:1-2 (NIV)**

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, I urge you, brothers, *in view of God's mercy*, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. <sup>2</sup>*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.* Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.
    - ii. **Ephesians 4:32 (NIV)**

<sup>32</sup>Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.
- 4) If we refuse to extend the same amazing grace to others, God will not extend His amazing grace to us
- a. When the king found out that the forgiven servant was unwilling to forgive, he revoked his pardon and made him pay his debt in full
    - i. **Matthew 18:31-35 (ESV)**

<sup>31</sup>When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. <sup>32</sup>Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. <sup>33</sup>And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' <sup>34</sup>And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt.
  - b. In the same way, the Bible is clear, that if we will not forgive others, God will not forgive us
    - i. **Matthew 18:35 (ESV)**

<sup>35</sup>So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."
    - ii. **Matthew 6:9-15 (NIV)**

<sup>9</sup>"This, then, is how you should pray: "'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, <sup>10</sup>your

kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup> Give us today our daily bread. <sup>12</sup> *Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.* <sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.' <sup>14</sup> *For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.* <sup>15</sup> *But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*

- c. However, long-term, unrepentant, unforgiveness is not a sign that God's pardon has been revoked, but that God's pardon was never truly received in the first place.
  - i. God offers His pardon through Jesus to all, but not all truly accept it.
  - ii. Those who truly accept are forever changed, and their pardon is never revoked.
  - iii. **1 John 3:9 (ESV)**  
<sup>9</sup>No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.
  - iv. **Philippians 1:6 (ESV)**  
<sup>6</sup>And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

#### A few additional thoughts on forgiveness

- It's pretty easy to forgive someone when they truly feel bad for what they did, admit specifically what they did wrong, and humbly ask for your forgiveness
  - o Knowing that unforgiveness kills eternally, we need to be sure we're making forgiveness easy for others by taking the log out of our own eye and going to them
- It's much more difficult when they don't
  - o Are we still required to forgive when people are unrepentant?
  - o Yes, for three reasons

- First, one of God's commands to forgive are contingent on the other person asking for forgiveness
  - **Matthew 18:21-22 (ESV)**  
<sup>21</sup> Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" <sup>22</sup> Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.
  - **Matthew 18:35 (ESV)**  
<sup>35</sup> So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."
  - **Matthew 6:14-15 (NIV)**  
<sup>14</sup> For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. <sup>15</sup> But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.
  
- Second, Jesus' example on the cross
  - **Luke 23:34 (ESV)**  
<sup>34</sup> And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."...
  - Some would say, "But what about 1 John 1:9?"
    - o **1 John 1:9 (ESV)**  
<sup>9</sup> *If we confess our sins*, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
  - If God requires us to confess and repent of our sins before He forgives us, don't we have the right to require the same of others? I would say NO.
    - o Though in one sense God does require us to confess and repent of our sins in order to be forgiven, in another sense He forgave those

who would trust in Him long before they ever asked.

- **Romans 5:8 (NIV)**

- <sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: *While we were still sinners*, Christ died for us.

- **Luke 23:34 (ESV)**

- <sup>34</sup> And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."...

- Finally, if we wait for others to ask our forgiveness before we forgive them we'll all be going to hell.
- So how do we do it? How do we forgive those who never acknowledge their sin and never ask for forgiveness?
  - o Remember how much you've been forgiven
  - o Recognize that, at least to a degree, "they know not what they do."
    - Sin is blind
  - o Trust that one way or another justice will be done.
    - Either they will pay for their sins or Jesus will
  - o Understand what it means to forgive
    - To forgive means to stop hating and wanting the worst for the person who's hurt you. It means to hope the best for them.
    - It does not mean excusing the wrongs they're done or sweeping them under the rug. It also does not mean, *necessarily*, that things go back to normal.
    - It means that you to love them, as you love yourself. (C.S. Lewis' chapter on forgiveness in Mere Christianity)

Where are you this morning?

