

**"The Need of Forgiveness"**

**Part 1**

**2 Corinthians 2:5-11**

**Introduction:** In the church at Corinth many believe there were 2 people who caused the Apostle Paul grief. One of the men is believed to be the man in 1 Corinthians 5 who was involved in the immorality. The other was a man who was the spearhead for the false teachers and the critics who were so determined to destroy the credibility of Paul. We, however, cannot be sure if there were 2 men or not, but we can be sure that there was the man in 1 Corinthians 5.

Tonight in our study we are going to consider the subject of forgiveness, and in the text before us we shall see what Paul said about offering forgiveness to the man in the church at Corinth that had caused the grief. But before we get to our text tonight, I want to lay a foundation upon which we can build the message for tonight.

You and me as believers are called to live in a way that the world will see Jesus Christ in us.

**2 Corinthians 5:20a**

<sup>20</sup> *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ,*

**Philippians 1:20-21**

<sup>20</sup> *According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also **Christ shall be magnified in my body,** whether it be by life, or by death.*

<sup>21</sup> ***For to me to live is Christ,** and to die is gain.*

Paul wrote these verses while he was in prison, and even there it was his desire to magnify Jesus Christ in life or death. If he lived, it would be to glorify Jesus Christ, and if he died, he would gain.

**Galatians 2:20**

<sup>20</sup> *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but **Christ liveth in me:** and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

Paul lived by faith, and so in his life, it was Jesus Christ who was seen. So we can be sure that as believers, we too are to live in a way that others see Jesus Christ in us.

Now if we are going to manifest Jesus Christ in our lives, then we can be sure that one of the characteristics which **MUST** be at the forefront of our lives is **FORGIVENESS**. I say this because this is exactly what we see in our Lord. We can find passage after passage that exhorts us to be people of forgiveness. Let me show you a few.

**Luke 17:3-4**

<sup>3</sup> *Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.*

<sup>4</sup> *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.*

**Matthew 18:21-22**

<sup>21</sup> *Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?*

<sup>22</sup> *Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.*

Here in these verses Jesus told Peter that our forgiveness is to be unlimited. Jesus also spoke of the importance of forgiveness in the Sermon on the Mount.

**Matthew 6:9-15**

<sup>9</sup> *After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.*

<sup>10</sup> *Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*

<sup>11</sup> *Give us this day our daily bread.*

<sup>12</sup> *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*

<sup>13</sup> *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*

<sup>14</sup> **For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:**

<sup>15</sup> **But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.**

The context here is **PRAYER** and Jesus adds a footnote at the bottom to help us to know that if we hold a grudge against our fellow man then we are out of fellowship with God and our prayers will be of no effect.

**Psalm 66:18**

<sup>18</sup> *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:*

Jesus set the example for us at the cross.

**Luke 23:33-34**

<sup>33</sup> *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.*

<sup>34</sup> *Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.*

We could go on and on but from these verses we can see that as children of God we are to manifest Christ, and in so doing we are to be sure to show forgiveness to those who offend us, and our forgiveness is to be unlimited.

I. **Paul's Appeal**

**Notice 2 Corinthians 2:5**

The contrast here is with the previous verse and the letter which Paul had written. He had not written to them to cause grief. Then here in verse 5 he says if anyone has caused grief, it was a small thing to him.

Now I believe that Paul is referencing the man of 1 Corinthians 5 here in this verse. One of the points we need to see here is that Paul never names the man. It is not his desire to slander the man nor is it his desire to spread among others the sin of this man. He will not name this man one time in this or any other text. Remember back in 1 Corinthians 13 when we looked at the characteristics of love?

**1 Corinthians 13:7**

<sup>7</sup> **Beareth all things**, *believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*

The word "beareth" means "to cover". It has the idea of casting a blanket over something to conceal the matter. This is what love does and this is exactly what Paul is doing by not mentioning the man's name. He must write concerning the matter as we shall see, but he will keep it as discreet as he can. I want to show you how this verse is translated in the Amplified Bible.

<sup>5</sup> *But if someone has caused [all this] sorrow, he has caused it not to me, but in some degree—not to put it too severely—[he has distressed and grieved] all of you.*

The point I want us to see is that the actions of this man impacted the entire church as well as Paul. When someone makes a choice to step into sin, it is very much like throwing a stone into a pond. There is a big splash where the stone went in, but then the waves from the stone find their way the entire way to the shore and into every ounce of back water. This is exactly how the choice to step into sin works. It not only impacts the one who makes the poor choice, but it reaches far into the lives of the innocent around that individual.

### Notice 2 Corinthians 2:6

The man who was guilty of the sin had received his share of punishment. This is most likely a reference to putting the man out of the church.

### 1 Corinthians 5:11-13

<sup>11</sup> *But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.*

<sup>12</sup> *For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?*

<sup>13</sup> *But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.*

The Corinthians had been obedient to what Paul had commanded them to do. This was used by God to convict the man, and he repented. When he repented, Paul let them know it was time to stop the punishment. Some believe that after the man repented, the church refused to take him back in. They seemed to have put him out for life. But that was never the intent of the punishment. It was not to set him out of the church forever, but it was to be done so that God could work in his heart and then he would repent and come back into the church. Let me show you the purpose of God's chastening in the life of His children.

### Hebrews 12:6-11

<sup>6</sup> *For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

<sup>7</sup> *If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?*

<sup>8</sup> *But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.*

<sup>9</sup> Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

<sup>10</sup> For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

<sup>11</sup> Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Here we see that the chastisement of God is for the purpose of bringing the believer back into fellowship, so that he or she can live a life of righteousness again and bear fruit for God. That was the purpose of the punishment for the man in 1 Corinthians 5. But apparently the church at Corinth was reluctant to bring him back in.

#### Notice 2 Corinthians 2:7-8

Instead of keeping the man at a distance, they were to welcome him back with open arms and affirm their love to him. To continue to punish him after his repentance could cause the man to be overcome with sorrow. So the point was they were to forgive him and show him love. This was to be the order for church discipline.

#### Matthew 18:15-17

<sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> 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.

<sup>17</sup> 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.

If the one who has sinned repents, then he or she is to be forgiven and then brought back into the church. I want to take a moment here and look at how Ray Stedman defines forgiveness. He says there are 3 promises to forgiveness:

1. It is a promise that you make to the individual who has offended you and now has repented, in which you are saying to him or her, "I will not let my attitude toward you be governed any longer by this offense. It has been put aside. My treatment of you from here on will be as though this had never happened." It is a promise you make never to bring it up again. In marriage many problems go on for years and years because we tend to go back and dig up all the past, which is an indication that it has never been forgiven. Some mates don't get hysterical, they get historical! That is the problem, and that creates a problem.

2. **It is a promise not to pass it on to anybody else.** When a matter is forgiven it is to be forgotten. Now it may be that everyone knows it, because, as in this case in Corinth, it had been told to the whole church. But what it means is that nobody throws it at him again, or holds it over his head, or reminds him of it every time any further difficulty occurs. It is a promise to drop the matter, leave it in the past, and never bring it up to anybody again.
3. **It is a promise to yourself that, when your memory goes back to it, as it will occasionally, you are not going to allow it to seize hold of your heart and make you angry all over again.** The minute it comes back to mind, you put it aside as something that belongs to the past, you are not going to dwell on it. It is a promise, therefore, to repeat your act of forgiveness, no matter how often the memory comes up. That is what forgiveness is.

### Conclusion:

In many churches today there is no church discipline. In some of the churches where there is church discipline today, there is no forgiveness. The lack of forgiveness with the church is just as serious as the lack of discipline.

We must always remember that we are all members of the body of Christ, and when one member suffers, we all suffer with the suffering member.

### 1 Corinthians 12:25-26

<sup>25</sup> *That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.*

<sup>26</sup> *And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.*

Let me show you what Hodge says concerning church discipline and loving the sinner.

***"When the offender is made to feel that, while his sin is punished, he himself is loved; and that the end aimed at is not his suffering but his good, he is more likely to be brought to repentance." (Hodge)***

This is a very important statement. When the person who has sinned understands that he or she is loved while at the same time their sin is punished, and that the goal is for his or her good, then they are more likely to repent. This by the way is the purpose of discipline, and it is the will of God. God never desires for us to continue to discipline a fellow believer after they have repented of their sin. But instead we are to show love and acceptance

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when the repentance comes. I have seen people in the body of Christ fall into sin and then repent, and then I have seen fellow believers completely ignore them. They would never walk across the aisle to shake the person's hand or to say hello. This kind of action is not the will of God. It is by the way the very attitude of the Pharisees. It is self-righteousness, and it is sin.