

"The Peace of Forgiveness"

Matthew 18:21-35

Introduction: Today we are stepping away from our study of Ephesians to look at a message that is one that all of us need to hear from time to time. This may be a message that I will do once every year because it is so important. The subject today is "FORGIVENESS". This is not a message on God's forgiveness for mankind, this is a message on our forgiveness of our fellowman. It is a subject that is easy to talk about but sometimes it can be extremely difficult to live.

I am sure that there is not one person in here today that has not been hurt by the actions or the words of another person. Depending on the depth of the pain which they caused you may have forgiven them, or you may still be carrying within your heart unforgiveness toward that individual. Maybe it is a situation where this person has hurt you multiple times and you have determined that you have had enough, and you refuse to grant forgiveness to the one who has hurt you. You may be walking around with anger and bitterness toward that person. Many times, the anger and bitterness is suppressed but at other times you may see the person or there is something that reminds you of what they have done and when that reminder comes the anger and bitterness manifest their ugly heads within you.

It has become crystal-clear that Christians have a lot of anger and bitterness bottled up inside. There is an answer for the anger and bitterness. There is a Biblical way to handle anger and bitterness and it is wrapped up in one word. If you ever learn to put this word into practice it can change your life, save your marriage, restore broken relationships and drain the venom of bitterness from your life. The word is "FORGIVENESS". This is the answer to anger and bitterness. The Bible has much to say about the subject of forgiveness.

Ephesians 4:30-32

³⁰ *And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*

³¹ *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:*

³² *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

Colossians 3:12-13

¹² Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

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.

Today we are going to look at a parable which Jesus told that teaches us much about forgiving one another.

I. The Introduction to the Parable

Notice Matthew 18:21-22

Peter may have had a situation in his life where someone continued to offend him. So, he brought this question to Jesus. He wanted to know what Jesus had to say about forgiving a repeat offender. Peter believed he was being gracious by offering forgiveness 7 times and he was. That is not easy to do when you are dealing with a repeat offender. So, Peter was certainly being gracious. The religious leaders of Peter's day taught that forgiveness only needed to be given 3 times then you were free to retaliate. So, Peter was going beyond what the religious leaders taught.

Application:

Humanly speaking repeated forgiveness is not easy. When someone offends us repeatedly the human tendency is to retaliate or just somehow let them have it. When we are repeatedly hurt there is the tendency to build walls up so as to guard our hearts.

We are just like Peter in that we want to set limits upon how much we will take before we turn the tables on someone. We reach the point where we want to say, NO MORE MR. NICE GUY!"

When Jesus answered Peter's question, I am sure it was a shock. Jesus told Peter he was not to forgive only seven times but until SEVENTY TIMES SEVEN. What Jesus was saying to Peter was two things:

1. Don't keep count of offences and your forgiveness.

You know how it goes. That man has offended me 400 times now, so I only need to offer forgiveness 90 more times. That is NOT what Jesus is saying. We don't keep score.

2. Our forgiveness is to be UNLIMITED.

There are not to be any limits upon our forgiveness. We will look at this in more detail as we go through our message today. It was then, Peter's question that set the stage for the parable.

II. The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

Notice Matthew 18:23-25

Jesus begins the telling the parable to illustrate a spiritual lesson.

Let me just stop and explain what a parable was. The word "PARABLE" means "to cast alongside". So, a parable was an earthly story cast alongside a spiritual Truth for the purpose of helping us to better understand the spiritual Truth. The spiritual Truth here is that forgiveness is to be unlimited so that is what we shall see in the parable.

In this parable Jesus tells of a certain king that declared a day of reckoning in which his servants would be held accountable. On this day there was one who was brought to him that owed him 10,000 talents which was an astronomical amount of money. Some believe it would be equal to about 25 million dollars today.

The dollar amount is really not that important but what is important is that this debt was so large that it would be impossible for the man to pay.

Application:

Let me just stop here and help you to see some parallels connected with this story. These servants that worked for this king were going along in life and unexpectedly there is an announcement that their king is calling them in to settle all accounts. This certainly was not expected by the man who owed such a large debt. He probably never gave any thought to a day of reckoning but it came.

I need to remind all of us that there is coming a day of reckoning for each and every person.

Matthew 25:14-15, 19

¹⁴ For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

¹⁵ And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

¹⁹ After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

These servants were given talents and on a certain day he returned unannounced and he called them to hold them accountable for what had been given to them. So, there will be a day of reckoning for all.

- **Believers** - Our day of reckoning will be at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:10

¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

- **Unbelievers** - All unbelievers will have their day of reckoning at the Great White Throne Judgment.

Revelation 20:11-12

¹¹ And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

If you are unsaved and you die without Jesus Christ, you will stand at this judgment and be judged for your sin. You will be responsible for your sin debt. And let me just say that your sin debt is so large that you would never be able to pay it and so you will be cast into the Lake of Fire as the payment for your sin.

That is what the servant in the parable is facing. Not a sin debt but a debt too large to pay. His family was about to be sold to pay on his debt.

Notice Matthew 18:26-27

The man did the only thing he could do and that was to beg for forgiveness. His lord then had compassion and he forgave him the entire debt. This was amazing! He was free and his family was free. No more debt.

Application:

This is a picture of what happens when accept Jesus Christ as our Savior. Our sin is removed from our account and we are given the righteousness of Jesus Christ. This is the LEGAL act of justification.

Romans 3:22-24

²² Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

²³ For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

²⁴ Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

This provision flows out of God's love and compassion for us.

John 3:16

¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Notice Matthew 18:28-30

The man who had been forgiven the great debt went out and found a man who owed him a payable debt and he took him by the throat and demanded payment. He begged for more time to pay but the man would grant no such thing, so he had him cast into prison.

We look at this and think, "How could the man do after he had just experienced the miracle of forgiveness for his debt?"

Application:

This shows how wrong it is for a Christian to withhold forgiveness. We who know Jesus Christ have experienced the greatest miracle of all and that is that we have been forgiven of our sin debt. We have been saved from **ETERNAL DAMNATION**. God removed from our accounts a debt so large that we would never have been able to pay it. Out of His love flowed His grace and He freely took away all our sins.

How ridiculous would it be then to withhold forgiveness from someone who offends or harms us? Our sin killed the Son of God and He forgave us. Therefore, we have no right to withhold forgiveness.

Notice Matthew 18:31

His fellow servants witnessed what he did, and it made them very sorry. They knew what had happened to this man and they expected the same from him. But it was like he had forgotten already what had happened.

Application:

Let me say that when we withhold forgiveness from those who offend us, we are destroying our testimony. Let us remember that people are to see JESUS CHRIST in us.

Philippians 1:20-21

²⁰ 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.

²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

We cannot magnify Jesus if we refuse to grant forgiveness.

Luke 23:33-34

³³ *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.*

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

III. The Consequences

Notice Matthew 18:32-34

Because he refused to grant forgiveness he was delivered over to the tormentors.

IV. The Application

Notice Matthew 18:35

These words are for believers. Jesus said, "What happened to that man will happen to you unless you learn to forgive and forgive and forgive." The tormentors will come and take you away and torture you.

What tormentors? The hidden tormentors of anger and bitterness that eat your insides out, the tormentors of frustration and malice that give you ulcers and high blood pressure and migraine headaches and lower back pain, the tormentors that make you lie awake at night on your bed stewing over every rotten thing that happens to you. The tormentors of an unforgiving heart who stalk your trail day and night, who never leave your side, who suck every bit of joy from your life.

Why? BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT FORGIVE FROM THE HEART. It is happening to you just as Jesus said because you refuse to forgive.

Conclusion:

Listen to the words of one teacher on forgiveness:

"So many of us need to give forgiveness. We've been living for years under the burden of remembered hurts. Some of the things that bother us go back to our childhood. Some of them involve people we haven't seen for a long time. It may be a brother or a sister, a close friend, a husband or a wife, or perhaps someone who mistreated us at work.

What we need is to become great forgivers. Why? Because forgiveness will save your marriage when nothing else will. Forgiveness will restore your family when nothing else will. Forgiveness will repair a broken heart when nothing else will. Forgiveness is the key that can open a closed heart.

A great many of us ought to take a trip out to the Cemetery of Forgiveness, make a list of the faults, sins and failures of those we love, dig a hole in the ground, and bury those faults forever. And never dig them up again.

When does revival come? It comes when husbands and wives on the brink of divorce forgive one another. It comes when teenagers who are filled with anger and parents who are exasperated forgive one another. It comes when Sunday School teachers who are jealous and church members who can't get along and elders who constantly criticize each other learn to forgive one another. It comes when businessmen and housewives and students and singles and all God's children give up their anger, get rid of their bitterness, turn away from their resentment and forgive one another.

What is needed is a great revival of forgiveness. And it needs to begin this very moment. Many of us came this morning with unresolved hurts going back many years. We've been angry and bitter far too long. The hidden tormentors have done their work.

Now it's time to forgive."