

“Why We Should Forgive” by E Terry Delivered 06-24-18
Matthew 6:9 -15; Ephesians 4:17 - 5:1, Colossians 3:1-17, **Matthew 18:21-35 (Sermon)**

Forgiveness is one of the foundational principles of Christianity.

Just before God gave Moses the second set of The 10 Commandments God introduced Himself by proclaiming His characteristics to Moses.

“Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation” (Exodus 34:5-7).

God described Himself as loving, compassionate, slow to anger, and forgiving.

But God also stated He punishes the guilty.

Notice God said He forgives ***“wickedness, rebellion, and sin.”***

God’s forgiveness is complete for all those who truly repent.

In 1st John 1:9 we read, ***“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”***

And Romans 8:1 states there is no condemnation for those in Christ.

As Christians we all enjoy God’s forgiveness.

But this morning we will **not** be focusing on God’s forgiving us, but rather I want us to focus on us forgiving other people.

We need to talk about forgiving one another because we have all been offended by someone and we have all offended someone.

We all have wronged someone and we have all been wronged.

We all have been insulted and we have all insulted someone.

We all have been hurt by someone and we have all hurt someone.

Even when you are trying to do the right thing somebody close to you may misunderstand your intentions and /or actions and will be hurt.

Offenses will happen because we all have a sinful nature, we all have committed sinful acts, and we all live in a sinful world.

But it is not the offense that destroys our relationship with another person, but rather it is our unwillingness to forgive that destroys our relationship with another person.

How we deal with offenses determines our relationship with the person that hurt us.

Therefore forgiveness is essential if we are to enjoy peace and harmony in our family, in our marriage, with our friends, and within our church family.

Forgiveness is the key to joy, peace, harmony, and fellowship.

So what is forgiveness? To forgive means there is no anger on your part and there is no desire to get even or to punish the person who hurt you even though you have been hurt by that person.

You see forgiveness is a choice you make.

There are physical reasons we should choose to forgive everyone who offend us and there are spiritual reasons we should choose to forgive anyone who offend us.

First let's briefly think about the physical reasons we should forgive everyone who offends us.

Obviously when you refuse to forgive someone you destroy your relationship with that person.

When you refuse to forgive you are also destroying yourself.

The longer you hold a grudge the longer the grudge holds you.

You become an angry person.

You develop a distorted view of the situation and you also have a distorted view of that person.

You think about getting even with the person who offended you and you find fault with everything they do.

Now let's look at some spiritual reasons we should choose to forgive those people who offend us.

First and foremost, we are commanded to forgive all the people who offend us.

In our lesson from Colossians we read, ***"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you"*** (Colossians 3:13).

Ephesians 4:32 also commands us to forgive. ***"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."***

In Matthew 5:43-44 Jesus said; ***"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven."***

When we withhold forgiveness we are not loving that person.

Jesus said, ***"This is my command, love each other"*** (John 15:17).

And 1st John 4:8 states, ***"Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love."***

Next, when we pray The Lord's Prayer, we pray, "***Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors***". Notice the past tense here, "***As we also have forgiven our debtors.***"

In other words we are saying, "God, only forgive me if I have forgiven all the people who have ever wronged me; All the people who have hurt me; all the people who have let me down."

You have heard people say, "I will never forgive that person."

That is sad because what they are doing is closing the door for God to forgive them.

You have also heard people say, "I will forgive them but I will never forget it."

Think about that.

Is that true forgiveness?

Is that what we want God to say to us?

In the parable from Matthew 18 we read that the servant owed a debt that he could never repay.

But the king had mercy on him and forgave all of his debt.

But that same servant refused to forgive his fellow servant who owed him a very small debt.

In this parable the king represents God and the servant who owed the king 10,000 talents represents us.

The servant who owed 100 denarii represents anyone who has offended us.

Matthew 18:35 is crystal clear and is the bottom line for us is; "***This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.***"

You see, when we fail to completely forgive anyone who offends us we are closing the door for God to forgive us.

In Ephesians 5:1 we are commanded to "***be imitators of God***".

Our God is a forgiving God (Exodus 34:5).

When we choose to forgive others we are imitating God's forgiveness.

And if we refuse to forgive others we are not being like Jesus.

God is holy and when we withhold forgiveness we are not leading holy lives.

When we withhold forgiveness we are sinning and sin separates us from God.

Withholding forgiveness and seeking revenge is a form of hate and 1st John 3:15 clearly states, "***Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.***"

And as you know the 6th Commandment states ***“You shall not murder”*** (Exodus 20:13).

Forgiveness is not only about the little things in life.

Forgiveness is also about the big things that cause real pain and change or interrupt our lives.

Peter asked Jesus, ***“How many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me; Up to seven times?”***

Peter was really feeling pious and that he was really going the extra mile, and then some.

You see the Jewish Law required people to forgive their brother 3 times.

Here, Peter is willing to forgive more than twice what was required.

But notice in verse 22, Jesus says, ***“I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven times”***.

In other words, Jesus is saying; we are to forgive an infinite number of times.

This may sound harsh but when we remember all that God has forgiven us of and how many times God has forgiven us, it is the very least we can do.

God expects His children to always forgive.

No matter what, Christians are called to be *“Professional Forgivers”*.

In the parable of the unforgiving servant we find several aspects of forgiveness that we need to consider.

1. Our forgiveness of others is a choice.

We make a choice to forgive that person or not to forgive that person every time we are wronged or hurt or taken advantage of.

2. As Christians we are to forgive out of an attitude of gratitude.

We can never repay God for one little sin we have committed.

In Colossians 3:13 we read, ***“Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you”***.

3. Forgiveness is much more than lip service.

Verse 35 tells us true forgiveness must come from the heart and true forgiveness is complete.

Forgiveness is telling the person who wronged us: *“What you did hurt me”* or *“What you did was wrong, but because God forgave me, I choose to forgive you”*

4. God’s forgiveness of us is conditional.

Yes our debt to God was canceled when Jesus died on the cross for our sins.

But remember in the parable when the King heard that the servant had not extended the same mercy to his fellow servant he called the servant back and told him, ***“Since you did not forgive your fellow servant and punished him, I will not forgive you and I will punish you”.***

In Matthew 5:24, Jesus told us to ***“leave our gift at the altar and go be reconciled with our brother.”***

In other words, our worship is empty if we have not forgiven our fellow man.

Jesus is saying that sincere worship cannot take place until reconciliation with a brother or sister has taken place!

When we choose to forgive those who offend us we demonstrate that we are truly thankful for The Lord forgiving us.

We have all disobeyed The Lord, we all have sinned, and we all deserve to be cast into hell because we have a debt that we can never repay. (Romans 3:23 & Romans 6:23)

We were all condemned to die an eternal death for a debt that we could never repay.

That would be justice.

But the Good News of the Gospel is that Jesus paid our debt for us.

God cancels our debt that is so great we can never repay it when we accept God’s free gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:1 tells us, ***“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”***

Jesus expects His disciples to choose to forgive everyone who hurts us and wrongs us.

And that is not easy.

That is very hard.

But the Good News is that God did not leave us helpless.

In Philippians 4:13 we read, ***“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”*** and Luke 1:37 ***“With God nothing is impossible”.***

And in 2nd Corinthians 5:17-18; ***“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come. All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”***

When God forgives God also regenerates.

The person who understands and appreciates God's forgiveness will want to forgive their fellow man.

When we are forgiven by God, then we can forgive ourselves.

Our first priority is to be right with God and our second priority is to be right with other people.

When we truly understand God's forgiveness then we can begin to mend the human relationships that have been destroyed.

If it were up to us would we never forgive serial killers.

The world view is, *"If you forgive these people there is no justice!*

If you don't make them pay, then right and wrong do not seem to matter".

"What is to stop them from doing it again and hurting someone else?"

But we need to remember the words of Romans 12:19 ***"Vengeance is mine says the Lord I will repay."***

Forgiveness is serious business and as Christians we are called to forgive everyone who offends us.

Now I am going to ask each of us to think back over our lives and ask ourselves *"have I truly forgiven all the people who have hurt me, the people who have wronged me, the people who have caused my life to be miserable, and the people who have used me or abused me."*

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you recall those people.

Then honestly ask yourself, *"Have I truly forgiven that person?"*

If you have not truly forgiven that person, do it now.

Release that person from the prison of your heart.

When we free those people from the prison in our hearts, we free ourselves.

In Matthew 18:18, Jesus said, ***"I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."***

Forgiving those people is for you; not for the person that wronged you.

God's word is clear God will not forgive us until we forgive those people.

Lets us bow in prayer and take the next few minutes to forgive those people whom we have not totally forgiven in the past and take this time for us to get right with God.

Let us pray silently then I will close the prayer.