

# Forgive Us as We Forgive

## I. INTRO

- A. Forgiveness is tough
- B. We love being forgiven, but forgiving others? That's a little harder
  - 1. We forgive others every day when we choose not to be offended
  - 2. But forgiving someone who cuts you off at the buffet is different than someone who cusses you out... or spits on you... or worse
- C. When we cannot or when we refused to forgive it has huge implications
- D. How does a lack of forgiveness impact you?
  - 1. **Mental Health Issues:** anxiety and depression.
  - 2. **Stress Response:** Elevated cortisol levels, increased heart rate
  - 3. **Physical Health Problems:** Cardiovascular problems, compromised immune function, and gastrointestinal issues.
  - 4. **Low Self-Esteem:** Negative self-perception leading to a lack of confidence, difficulties in forming and maintaining relationships, and more
  - 5. **Impaired Coping Mechanisms:** Unhealthy coping mechanisms
  - 6. **Social Isolation**
  - 7. **Sleep Disturbances**
  - 8. **Relationship Strain**
  - 9. **Cognitive Impact**
- E. And these are just physical things! We haven't even started talking about the spiritual implications of a lack of receiving and giving forgiveness!

## II. Today we want to focus on this next part of the Lord's prayer: *Matthew 6:12, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.* Realize that this is the only part of the Lord's prayer that Jesus comments on after he relays it to the disciples: *Matthew 6:14–15, For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

- A. 'Debt' here is about sin
  - 1. When humans sin, they fail to meet the moral obligations set by God's holy standards.
  - 2. In a legal and moral sense, we accrue a debt because we fall short of the perfect righteousness required by God.
- B. A few weeks ago we talked about confession. I don't want to push into this again and would encourage you to go back and listen to that sermon
- C. Summarized, we need to keep short accounts with God in prayer so that we can enjoy a wonderful relationship with him
  - 1. *1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*
  - 2. Jesus says in John 13 that we've already been cleansed, and now we just need to wash our hands and feet → it's about fostering health spiritually
- D. The way in which God forgives us is by refusing to exact payment for our debt from us and by receiving that payment from someone else → Jesus

- III. It's 12b and 14-15 that we want to focus on today and how it impacts us and our prayers; *Matthew 6:12b, 14–15, ...as we also have forgiven our debtors. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*
- A. Here is a rather troublesome truth: **The forgiveness we seek from God is somehow tied to our willingness to extend forgiveness to others.**
  - B. In other words, Jesus says that if you want to be forgiven, you need to forgive
  - C. Twice Jesus says "IF" pushing into the reciprocal nature of forgiveness.
    1. 'If' means that forgiveness is an active choice, not a passive state.
    2. You need to CHOOSE to forgive
  - D. But look at what is at stake: The promise here to experience God's forgiveness is conditional upon our own willingness to forgive others.
  - E. This introduces a terrifying scenario:
    1. **Failure to forgive others impacts the divine forgiveness we receive.**
  - F. Now, I want to be clear that this doesn't imply an earned forgiveness.
    1. We do not earn God's forgiveness by forgiving others.
    2. **Forgiveness from God flows into forgiveness towards others**
    3. A person who refuses to forgive, a person who refuses to be a peace-maker, a person who craves revenge is lacking the transformative power at work in their life
    4. We are saved by faith alone, but saving faith is active faith - faith at work!
  - G. In case you are wondering, this isn't a one-off comment from the Lord. This is a consistent theme in the Scriptures:
    1. *Col 3:13, Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*
- IV. But why include this in a teaching on prayer?
- A. A lack of forgiveness forms a block in your relationship with God
  - B. Prayer is NOT some ritualistic, one-way communication but a transformative dialogue with God.
  - C. How can we pray to a God who forgives us freely, and ask him for relational restoration, while simultaneously denying that forgiveness to others?
- V. In John 8, we read an interesting story about sin, holiness, grace and forgiveness:
- A. At dawn [Jesus] went to the temple again, and all the people were coming to him. He sat down and began to teach them. Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, making her stand in the center. "Teacher," they said to him, "this woman was caught in the act of committing adultery. In the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" They asked this to trap him, in order that they might have evidence to accuse him.

Jesus stooped down and started writing on the ground with his finger. When they persisted in questioning him, he stood up and said to them, "The one without sin among you should be the first to throw a stone at her." Then he stooped down again and continued writing on the ground. When they heard this, they left one by one, starting with the older men. Only he was left, with the woman in the center.

When Jesus stood up, he said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

"No one, Lord," she answered.

"Neither do I condemn you," said Jesus. "Go, and from now on do not sin anymore."

- B. From this story we can see some big picture ideas about God, mankind, judgment and forgiveness.
1. **First, God is holy.**
    - a) God gave a law and that law had high demands.
    - b) The Pharisees were right that the law said that this woman should be stoned, but they failed to understand God's character
    - c) They viewed God as a plug-n-chug formula as opposed to a thinking, feeling, emotional being
  2. **Second, God is compassionate towards sinners.**
    - a) The idea that a holy God would be compassionate towards sinners is striking when you consider the fact that Jesus says "let the one without sin [judge]."
    - b) God is the only one without sin, yet he chose not to judge mankind, but instead to judge Christ so he could forgive mankind
  3. **Third, all have sinned.**
    - a) This woman was not perfect, but neither were her accusers.
    - b) Beginning with those who had the longest memories of their sins and heading in reverse towards the youngest in the crowd, one by one they realized that they were also guilty before a holy God
- C. Here, at the crossroads of a holy God and sinful man is the tension.
1. In order to be forgiven, you need to know that you are in need of forgiveness. If you, like the Pharisees when they first arrived on the scene, think that you are without sin, then you will condescend and point your boney finger at anyone you don't like or who is "worse than you."
  2. If, however, you know the depth of your own failures, and know that the only way you can stand before God is by his grace and mercy and not your own merit, then you view other people differently. You don't condemn, you love. You show compassion. You have mercy because you've been shown mercy.
- D. **The gospel is all about forgiveness.** Forgiveness received by trusting in Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, but also forgiveness given. Given to who? Undeserving people. Why? Because I am undeserving too.
- E. If, on the other hand, I think that I am where I am because of my own hard work, I have never done something foolish that could have resulted in inadvertently harming myself, someone else and ruining my life, that I never cheated on a test which could have gotten me expelled, and so on and so forth. If you truly think

that you are meritorious, you won't be a forgiving person. Why? Because you are self-righteous rather than resting in righteousness given to you on the basis of forgiveness.

- F. Forgiven people forgive people. It's that simple.
- VI. How? Where do you begin?
  - A. Realize that you need forgiveness that you cannot earn
  - B. Embrace the reality that the forgiveness God needs to give you is greater in scope & severity than anything you need to forgive another b/c of his deity
  - C. When you've been hurt, come to grips with the idea that you are guilty spiritually of whatever that person has done to you
    - 1. Ex: Jesus said to hate someone is to murder, to lust is to commit adultery
    - 2. Ex: We commit adultery spiritually with idols all the time, offending God
  - D. Ask God for forgiveness and ask him to help you to forgive others (supernatural)
  - E. Choose to forgive by refusing to exact payment that is due
- VII. Perhaps you have been a victim of sin and you say, "I have forgiven them." How do you know if your forgiveness is genuine or if you're just paying yourself lip service?
  - A. Symptoms of Unforgiveness:
    - 1. Persistent Negative Emotions
    - 2. Recurring Thoughts of Retaliation
    - 3. Avoidance
    - 4. Rehearsing the Offense
  - B. Indicators of Genuine Forgiveness:
    - 1. Emotional Release
    - 2. Empathy and Compassion
    - 3. Letting Go of the Need for Revenge
    - 4. Reconciliation or Acceptance
- VIII. At this point in time there is at least one person who is thinking, "But you don't know what my ex-husband did to me," or "You don't know how I have been stabbed in the back," or "My parents abused me like you couldn't possibly comprehend."
  - A. I am sorry for your pain.
  - B. Forgiveness received is a supernatural work
  - C. Forgiveness given is equally supernatural
  - D. Forgiveness is possible, and I am here to tell you it's closer than you think.
    - 1. Invite Dina on stage

**IX. Interview Dina (aim for 15 minutes)**

- A. Can you briefly tell us about the tragedy that befell you?**
- B. How was your life impacted by unresolved unforgiveness?**
- C. How did you begin being drawn to pursue forgiveness?**
- D. How did forgiveness come to fruition in your life?**
- E. How did the Lord take that forgiveness and then use it to transform your own heart to understand forgiveness**

**You can leave here today with freedom. If you need forgiveness or need to offer it to someone, please come and we will pray over you today.**