

DEVOTED

“You Want Me to What?”

February 16, 2025

INTRO.: Last week we spoke of something that causes us to fall down before God in worship. It’s something we speak of often from this pulpit. It’s something that we are quick to speak of and causes us to rejoice. It’s the truth that God forgives. It’s part of His character that we see spoken of and played out from Genesis to Revelation. It comes at a great cost to God: the shed blood of Jesus Christ, His Son. It’s something that demands a choice be made by us. We are all sinners and under the rightful judgment of God. Are we willing to admit our sin, repent of that sin, and seek God’s forgiveness based on Christ’s death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. This forgiveness is totally undeserved and all of grace. This allows us to sing the song we just sang:

Oh, how I love to speak of the forgiveness of God but how do I feel about forgiving others? It’s why I’ve entitled this message, *“You Want Me to Do What?”* After all, they don’t deserve my forgiveness. You don’t know what they did to me and they did it on purpose. They just can’t get away with hurting me. Jesus speaks a parable that gives an illustration of forgiveness and unforgiveness. This morning, we want to look at four things when it comes to forgiving others: **THE BASIS, THE BLUEPRINT, THE BARRIER, and THE BLESSING.** I want to tell you up front that what I’m talking about this morning isn’t easy but it’s necessary. You may need to see a Christian counselor to walk through forgiving others. The first step is recognizing the need.

We’re going to begin by reading through the parable I mentioned a few minutes ago that’s found in Matthew 18:21-35. As we’re reading, observe the similarities and differences of those forgiven.

Matthew 18:21–35 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-times seven. “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. “The servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. “But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded. “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.’ “But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.”

*Similarities:

Owed money, threatened with dire consequences (family sold; prison), promised to pay it back, begged for forgiveness

*Differences

One debt was unpayable, one who had the unpayable debt had it canceled, the other was thrown into prison
The one who didn’t forgive was thrown into prison, tortured, until he could pay back ALL that he owed

Conclusion: What did the king really want the unmerciful servant do? He wanted him to wake up, realize the great unpayable debt of which he had been forgiven, and so forgive the much smaller debt. This points us to:

THE BASIS FOR FORGIVENESS

What is the basis for forgiving another for a follower of Jesus Christ? One of the key points in this parable is that the first servant owed a debt he could not possibly pay. The writer used the greatest numerical value available in the Greek language. It represents an incalculable amount that would have been impossible to repay. This is a picture the debt of sin that every one of us owes God. There is absolutely no way any person could repay this debt.

Isaiah 64:6 All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

None of us have such an impressive resume of righteousness that we will get a pass from God when it comes to our sin. To understand the immensity of God’s forgiveness we need to have a right picture of His holiness. As we go along in

this message, I am going to refer to what we call the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6. Before giving the pattern Jesus tells them that they shouldn't pray to be seen by others, to impress others. They also shouldn't babble like unbelievers thinking that their prayers will be heard because of the length of their prayers.

Jesus says, *"This, then is how you should pray"*:

"you:" there is something very important in this sentence that we don't see in the English translation. The verb, "pray" contains the pronoun, "you," and yet in the original language Matthew adds the pronoun "you" also. This is put here for emphasis and points out the fact that as followers of Christ our prayers and the motivation of our prayers should be different than those Jesus previously described.

Stuart Weber, "His implication is, 'You, on the other hand (in contrast to both the pompous hypocrites and the thoughtless, superstitious Gentiles), are to pray simply and meaningfully as follows.'"

"pray:" this is a present tense command. This prayer is not given as something that we just say by memory. It is Jesus giving us a pattern for prayer. He begins by our need to concentrate on the character of God and the desire to have God's will be done. We would do well to approach God in a similar manner.

"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name."

"our Father:" In the Aramaic that Jesus spoke that would be "abba," a term of intimacy, "daddy." When a person comes to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, they are adopted by God and now can call Him, Father, "*Abba*." This is amazing! The next terms remind us of the greatness of God, that we don't come flippantly into His presence.

"who art in heaven:" This is Almighty God!! This is a picture of His supremacy and majesty. Because of our relationship with Jesus we can come "with confidence" into the presence of God!! Wow!!

Hebrews 4:16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

"hallowed be Your name:" this is also a command. This is the word, "holy."

John MacArthur: "To attribute to God the holiness that already is, and always has been, supremely and uniquely His. To hallow God's name is to revere, honor, glorify, and obey Him as singularly perfect."

The holiness of God exposes the magnitude of our sin. The religious leaders thought they were good because they followed all the rules. They looked good on the outside, but their hearts were far from God.

Matthew 5:21–22 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Matthew 5:27–28 "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

If our thoughts and attitudes are ungodly that's sin. Doing what is wrong (according to God) is sin and failing to do what is right (according to God) is sin. Through Jesus Christ how much of our sin has been forgiven?

Somebody shared this quote with me from Spurgeon, "Suffering is better than sinning. There is more evil in a drop of sin than in an ocean of affliction. Better, burn for Christ, than turn from Christ."

The basis for forgiving others is found in God's forgiveness of me. Like the man in the parable, how can I not forgive others, when God has forgiven me so much? Next, we want to look at:

THE BLUEPRINT FOR FORGIVENESS

A few years ago, when we were working on planning the garage, the youth room, and the bathrooms by the BFLC what did we need to have? We needed to have blueprints drawn up so those building these things had an idea of what we wanted it to look like and we had to make sure we followed the building codes.

How is forgiveness described in the Bible. Let's look at what the Apostle Paul has to say in Ephesians 4. In this chapter he describes what a person who comes to faith in Christ, is to stop doing and what they are to start doing instead.

Ephesians 4:31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

“get rid of:” This carries with it the idea of taking away or removing. It is in the form of a command and in a passive tense, which means we can't do this on our own. We need to seek God for His strength and power to get rid of the things Paul is about to mention.

The following is a list of what followers of Christ are to get rid of, followed by definitions taken from a commentary by John MacArthur:

“bitterness:” smoldering resentment, a brooding grudge-filled attitude

“rage, wrath:” wild rage, the passion of the moment

“anger:” internal smoldering, subtle & deep feeling

“brawling, clamor:” violent outburst, public outburst that reveals loss of control

“slander:” ongoing defamation of someone that rises from a bitter heart

“malice:” general term that is the root of all vices

But he doesn't stop there for he tells us what we are to do instead.

Ephesians 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

“be:” present tense command. What he describes is not optional.

Instead of all the words he listed above, the follower of Jesus is to be:

“kind:” benevolent, gracious, kind,” as opposed to “harsh, hard, bitter, sharp.” (Wuest)

“compassionate:” tenderhearted (Wuest)

“forgiving:” present tense participle (to forgive or show favor: has the root word “grace” in it)

“forgave:” past tense (accomplished fact for the believer)

How does the Bible describe God's forgiveness?

Colossians 2:13–15 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us **all** our sins, **14** having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. **15** And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

The basis for forgiveness is God's forgiveness, and the blueprint is forgiving as in Christ God forgave us. The third thing we want to look at is:

THE BARRIER WHEN I CHOOSE TO NOT FORGIVE

Why do I need to forgive others? What's the big deal?

How many here can finish this saying concerning the sky: “Red sky at night, sailors delight. Red sky in the morning, sailors take warning.”

How many know that this is in the Bible?

Matthew 16:2–3 He replied, “When evening comes, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,’ and in the morning, ‘Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.

Going back to the Lord's prayer, what does this say about forgiving others? Just like the red sky, there is a warning here about an unforgiving spirit.

Matthew 6:12; 14-15 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Sin has put us into debt with God. As we said earlier, it is a debt we cannot pay. Just as God has forgiven us, so we are to forgive others. For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. **15** But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

To be forgiving is to be one of the character traits of the believer because it is a character trait of God. Just like a red sky in the morning is a warning of the possibility of bad weather, God give us a warning if we are unforgiving. An unforgiving spirit will affect our relationship with God. This does not mean we will lose our salvation, but it will affect our fellowship with God. Unforgiveness will follow you.

Sometimes people will run from people, so they don't have to forgive them. Sometimes people will change churches because they are unwilling to forgive somebody in the church. If that is the case God will sometimes bring up another situation in the new church where the person will be challenged with the need to forgive. As long as you and I are around people we will need to forgive, and we will need to be forgiven.

Ruth Graham (Billy Graham's wife) said, "A happy marriage is the union of two good forgivers."

I know I am grateful to have a wife who is forgiving of my shortcomings for I am far from perfect.

Forgiveness is needed among the body of Christ in the local church. Forgiveness of one another is absolutely necessary in every church. Forgiveness does not mean we don't deal with or ignore sin. 1 Corinthians speak much about the importance of dealing with sin in the church (1 Corinthians 5-6). It is also very important the attitude we have when approaching another brother or sister in Christ concerning sin. It is to be done in humility, knowing we might need the same in the future. This same book of the Bible speaks about unresolved conflicts in the church and how it was dividing the church (1 Corinthians 1:10-13).

The basis of forgiveness is God's forgiveness, the blueprint of forgiveness is to forgive as God has forgiven us, the barrier is what happens with my relationship with God when I choose to not forgive, and lastly we see:

THE BLESSING OF FORGIVENESS

*Freedom. When I refuse to forgive I put myself in the prison of bitterness, anger, and possibly hatred. Unforgiveness can affect one's health, peace of mind, and rob one of the joy God wants us to have.

Forgiveness Unloads a Sack of Potatoes

A teacher once told each of her students to bring a clear plastic bag and a sack of potatoes to school.

They were instructed to call to mind every person they had a grudge against. For every person they refused to forgive, they chose a potato, wrote on it the name and date, and put it in the plastic bag.

They were told to carry this bag with them everywhere, putting it beside their bed at night, on the car seat when driving, on their lap when riding, next to their desk during classes.

Some bags became quite heavy. Lugging this around, paying attention to it all the time, and remembering not to leave it in embarrassing places was a hassle.

Over time the potatoes became moldy, smelly, and began to sprout "eyes."

Often we think of forgiveness as a gift to the other person, but it clearly is a gift to ourselves. *Source: Citation: www.TimTimmons.com*

*Relationships with God and others

Matthew 5:23–24 Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, **24** leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

*Testimony before a world who needs Jesus.

This affects my personal testimony and the testimony of the church.

SO WHAT???

*Have I come to know God's forgiveness?

*Is there someone from whom I need to seek forgiveness?

*Is there someone I need to forgive?

*Seek Biblical counseling if needed

Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive, as we had during the war. And then, to mention the subject at all is to be greeted with howls of anger."

Source: C. S. Lewis in Mere Christianity. Leadership, Vol. 17, no. 4