

The Forgiving Spirit

No. 157

Introduction.

- I. One time the **wife of an African chief** gave her life to Jesus. When her husband heard of this he forbade her to attend worship services. He threatened her with death. The lady loved Jesus and was eager to hear more about Him. She dared to go to worship even under the threat of death. Her husband learning about this met her on her return journey and beat her so savagely that he left her for dead. After a time curiosity moved him to go back and look for her. She was not where he had left her, but he noticed broken twigs and found her lying under a bush. Covering her with his cruel eyes he leered, "And what can your Jesus do for you now?" She opened her eyes, and looking at him, said gently, "He helps me to forgive you!"
- II. How awesome! How untypically human! How Christlike! Tonight, I would like to speak on "The Forgiving Spirit."
 - A. This is the spirit that every Christian must develop to please God. This is the spirit every Christian must have to enter heaven.
 - B. There are several things I would like to strongly stress about forgiveness.
- I. **The Importance And Necessity Of Forgiving One Another** - Let us consider the importance and necessity of forgiving one another.
 - A. In the first place, we must forgive one another because it is **a commandment**. (Mk. 11:25; Col. 3:13).
 - B. In the second place, we must forgive one another because the **example of Christ compels it**. (Lk. 23:34).
 1. The apostle Peter wrote. (1 Pet. 2:21-23).

21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, 22 who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; 23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;

2. Paul wrote. (Phil. 2:5).

3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

3. These scriptures teach us that we are to follow the example of Christ and have the mind of Christ. We must follow His example in being baptized., in attending services, in conduct, in service. We must also follow His example in forgiving others!

C. In the third place, we must forgive one another because the **examples of the early Christians teach it.**

1. **Stephen** is a splendid example of forgiveness. (Acts 7:60).
2. An **atheist** once said, "If there be a God, why didn't He help Stephen who prayed for his enemies as they stoned him to death?" The reply was, "He did by giving him grace to pray for his murderers."

D. In the fourth place, we must forgive because **love calls for it.** (1 Pet. 4:8; 1 Cor. 13:4, 6-7).

**1CO 13:4 Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant,
1CO 13:5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,
1CO 13:7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**

E. In the fifth place, we must forgive **because we have been forgiven.** (Eph. 4:32; Matt. 18:23-35).

F. In the sixth place, we must forgive that **we might be forgiven.** (Matt. 6:12, 14, 15).

1. These verses relate one of the most sobering truths of the Bible. It is forgive and be forgiven; or, refuse forgiveness and have forgiveness refused!
2. The most expensive thing in the world we can do is harbor ill will toward another. We pay the price of the loss of heaven.
3. We must give mercy to receive mercy. (Matt. 5:7; Jas. 2:13).

G. In the seventh place, we must **forgive to walk with God.** (Amos 3:3).

1. We cannot have fellowship with someone whose entire philosophy of life differs from our own.
2. This applies to us and God. (1 Jn . 1:5, 7).
3. God is light and God is forgiving and to have fellowship with God we must walk in the light and be forgiving as He is forgiving.

H. In the eighth place, we must forgive because it **may be later than we think.**

1. **Thackery** and **Dickens**, the two noted English literary masters back in the 19th century, became rivals. After several years of estrangement, they met accidentally in London. They frigidly faced one another. On an impulse, Thackery seized the hand of Dickens. Dickens was touched by the gesture. They left smiling with the old jealousy destroyed. In just a few days Thackery died; and, the next time Dickens saw him was when he looked down at his form in the grave. A writer, later recalling the story, wrote, "Is it not always well to seek forgiveness now?"
2. **We all stand on the verge of eternity.** Christ may come at any time or death may overtake us at any time and who wants to be found at His coming or at death estranged from his fellow man?
3. After the death of Queen Caroline, **Lord Chesterfield** said a sad thing, "An unforgiving, unforgiven dies." Oh, I pray this will not be said at our death!. "An forgiving, unforgiven dies."

II. **How We Are To Forgive** - Let us now consider how we are to forgive.

A. The Bible teaches that we must **forgive as God forgives**. (Heb. 8:12).

1. When God forgives us, he ceases to remember our sins. He ceases to hold the sin against us and does not bring it up again.
2. This is the way we must forgive. We must forgive completely from our hearts and must never bring the sin up again.

B. **Spurgeon** once said, “Forgive and forget; when you bury a mad dog, don’t leave his tail above the ground.”

III. **How Often We Are To Forgive** - Finally, let’s consider how often are to forgive.

A. Forgiveness comes very hard for most people. Most find it difficult to forgive even once; much less multiple times.

B. Peter asked Jesus. (Matt. 18:21).

C. Jesus answered. (Matt. 18:22).

1. Jesus was not teaching here that we should keep books and forgive our brother 490 times and no more.
2. Jesus taught we are to forgive our brother as often as he repents. (Lk. 17:3,4).
 - a. Even if our brother does not repent, we are not to hate him. We are to be good to him hoping this will soften his heart and lead him to repentance.
 - b. This is the way God treats us. He does not forgive use until we repent, but He tries to lead us to repentance through His goodness. (Matt. 5:45; Rom. 2:4).

How can we tell when we have forgiven?

1. Do we pray for the person who sinned against us?
2. Have we done good things to person who wronged us?

It commendable if you can answer “yes” to both of these questions. ***These things are not enough. Jesus taught we are to pray for and do good even to enemies.***

3. Have we rid our hearts of feelings of resentment?
4. Have we buried the matter and never bring up the wrong to the person and to others?
5. Are we sad when bad things happen to the person?
6. Are we glad when good things happen to the person?
7. Have we ceased to dwell on the wrong and almost never recall it?

8. Can we look the person who wronged us in the eyes and say, "I have forgiven you."

None of these tests stand alone. We must be able to answer "Yes" to all seven questions to be confident we have truly forgiven the person.

3. Let us pray this prayer to our God.

Dear heavenly Father, forgive me my sins this day. Let me freely forgive others as you freely forgave me and continue daily to forgive me of all my sins and iniquities. Your son Jesus Christ has obtained forgiveness for me through His precious blood and given me redemption , and I pray that in the Name of Jesus you would give me a forgiving spirit like yours, Holy Father. I ask that I be able to forgive others and remember their sins no more . I thank You for hearing my prayer and for my forgiveness. I love you Lord, always, and stand amazed in humble gratitude for your amazing grace.. In Jesus's name I pray , amen.

Conclusion.

- I. May each of us develop the forgiving spirit of our Master. May each of us sincerely forgive others from the heart. This forgiving spirit will make us happy and will open the gates of heaven for us. Remember the forgiving will be forgiven by God. The unforgiving will be lost forever.
- II. As we close this lesson, we want to extend the Lord's invitation. There may be some here who are not Christians and desire to come in faith and repentance to be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of sins. There may be Christians who desire the prayers of the church in their behalf. Come as we sing!

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