

Forgiving One Another

No. 216

Introduction.

- I. During the ministry of Jesus He stressed many characteristics a Christian must possess. One characteristic He stressed over and over again that every Christian must possess is forgiveness. Jesus taught that Christians, of all people, must be forgiving of others. He realized that you can expect the carnal man of the world to be unforgiving, but that this attitude should never characterize the child of God who has been born anew of water and the Spirit.
- II. I would like to define the word “forgiveness” and give some reasons why we must be forgiving of one another.
 - I. **Forgiveness** - It is very important that we define the word “forgiveness.”
 - A. I used to think that everyone knew the meaning of this word, but the longer I live the more I come to realize that very few know the meaning of forgiveness; much less practice it.
 1. The word “forgiveness” means “to cease to have resentment against someone because of wrong.”
 2. **It does not blot out the deed**, but it ceases to be held against the person. It is like taking an indictment in court and tearing it up and throwing it away.
 - B. The word “forgiveness” also means to forget, that is, we must not keep reminding a person of the wrong he has committed.
 1. For example, some **husbands and wives** say, “I have forgiven you,” but then remind their mate almost every day of their wrong.
 2. I submit to you that people like this do not know the first thing about forgiveness. They are burying the hatchet with the handle sticking out, ready for use on a moment’s notice and use it almost every day to butcher the one they have allegedly forgiven. This is certainly not forgiveness and none of us would want God to treat us like this.
 3. **When God forgives, He forgets!** The Hebrew writer, describing the blessings of man under the New Covenant, quotes God saying. (Heb. 8:12).
 - II. **Reasons For Forgiveness** - Let us now consider six fundamental reasons why it is necessary that we forgive one another.
 - A. In the first place, we must forgive because it is **commanded of God**. (Mk. 11:25; Col. 3:13b; Eph. 4:32; Matt. 18:21, 22).
 1. To the surprise of Peter, Jesus taught here we are to forgive our brother not three times as the Rabbis taught, but as often as he repents.
 2. The question is sometimes asked, “**Must I forgive a person if he does not repent?**”
 - a. The answer is “no.” God does not forgive us unless we repent and surely He does not requires more than this of us. (Lk. 17:3, 4).

- b. Even though God does not forgive us unless we repent, He manifests a kind disposition toward us. (Rom. 2:4).
- c. In like manner, we are to manifest a kind disposition to those who sin against us hoping this will lead them to repentance. (Matt. 5 :43, 44; Rom. 12:19-21).

B. In the second place, we must forgive because it is **vital to our happiness and health**.

1. The world is full of people who are unhappy and sick simply because they have stored up the grains of hate and resentment in their hearts.
2. There is a pathetic story told of **two mothers in Kentucky** who were good friends and whose sons roomed together in college. But during the summer vacation, some neighbors began to talk about the two boys and said that one boy was smarter than the other. This created ill feelings between the families and one thing brought on another until finally they became enemies and said many cruel, ugly things about one another. The boys went back to college, but they did not room together. After graduation, the two boys went back to that Kentucky town, one to practice law and the other to practice medicine. One August, during the election, the boys took different sides and began to argue. The argument became so heated that they fatally shot one another. You can then imagine the mean things the families said against one another. After a number of years one mother said, "I have to go to eternity, and I cannot live with hatred." The husband said, "What are you going to do?" She said, "I plan to go to see the mother of the boy who killed my boy and tell her I'm mean and sinful and ask her to forgive me." So the woman went down the road and knocked at the door of her enemy and the other woman came to the door and asked in a gruff tone, "Why do you come?" She replied, "I have come to tell you that I have been mean; I have said mean things and I have come to ask you to forgive me for all the things I've said." The other woman looked at her for moment and said, "I have longed to come to you." They fell into each other's arms and wept.
3. These women had suffered many years of unhappiness and lost their two sons because they were unwilling to forgive. A lack of forgiveness has caused countless others to be unhappy.

C. In the third place, we should forgive in order to **preserve peace**.

1. Think of the **wars** that have occurred because someone would not forgive! Think of the **churches** that have split because Christians would not forgive one another! Think of the **marriages** that have ended in divorce because husbands and wives would not forgive! Think of the **friendships** that have been destroyed because someone would not forgive.
2. **We can learn a valuable lesson from children here.** Children can fuss and fight and be back together in 10 minutes, but not adults. They are too full of devilish pride to forgive. We need the forgiving spirit of a little child.

D. In the fourth place, we must forgive because of the **Golden Rule**.

1. It teaches us to do to others as we want them to do to us. (Matt. 7:12).
2. Since we all want forgiveness, we should be forgiving.
3. It is a poor rule that does not work both ways.

E. In the fifth place, we should forgive because of the **effect it has on others**.

1. A number of years ago a **soldier was about to be court-martialed** for trouble-making and drunkenness.

The Colonel in charge of the proceedings asked his fellow officers, "What is do be done? We have tried everything." A young officer asked, "May I examine his record, sir?" After looking over the record the young officer said, "There is one thing that has never been done to this man." "What is that?" asked the Colonel. "Sir, this man has never been forgiven." This statement fell like a thunderclap on the officers and you could have heard a pin drop. The Colonel turned to the prisoner and said, "You have been punished many times and you are no better, indeed, you are worse. See, this time, I wipe the thing off the charge sheet. You are free - you are forgiven." This gracious, unusual action had great effect on this young man. He ceased drinking and in a few years was one of the most trusted men in the regiment.

2. We must never underestimate the power of forgiveness. It will surprise us what forgiveness will do for others as well as ourselves.

F. In the sixth place, we must forgive if we **desire a home in heaven**.

a. Heaven's gate is closed to those who will not forgive. (Matt. 6:12, 14, 15; 18:23-35).

b. This parable reminds me of a statement made in the book of James. (Jas. 2:13).

III. Examples Of Forgiveness - Let us now consider several examples of forgiveness from the Bible which should inspired us to better lives.

A. In **Genesis 50** there is the tender and touching story of Joseph whose brothers had sold him to the Ishaelites. The Ishmaelites sold him into the bondage Egyptian bondage. Later through the providence of God he made head over all Egypt with only the Pharaoh above him. When his brothers came to Egypt because of famine, Joseph had cause to hate his brothers and sentence them to death and his brothers expected him to do exactly that, but Joseph upon seeing his brothers wept and forgave them and returned good for evil.

B. Another moving story of forgiveness is the **story of Stephen**. After Stephen had preached a gospel message to the hardened Jews, they began to stone him. As the stones were dashing against his body, he prayed to the heavenly Father, saying, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." (Acts 7:60).

C. The most powerful example of forgiveness is **the Lord Jesus Christ**. As He was suffering on the cross, He did not curse those who nailed Him to the cross but prayed. (Lk. 23:34).

Conclusion.

I. **There is a grave**, not far from New York, which has just one word inscribed upon its headstone. There is no name, no date of birth or death. There is just the word "forgiven." But that is the biggest and greatest thing that can be said of a parson. It is not only important that we forgive others from the heart, but it is vital that we receive God's forgiveness. Without God's forgiveness we shall be lost for all eternity in the fires of hell.

A. Those who are within the body of Christ can obtain forgiveness of their sins by repenting and confessing them to God. (1 Jn. 1:9).

B. Those outside the body of Christ must repent and be baptized in order to have their sins washed away by the blood of Christ. (Acts 2:38; 22:16).

II. **During the early history of our country a young man was arrested** and charged with treason because he belonged to an organization which had been outlawed by the government. He was tried, convicted and sent to the penitentiary. His aged father persuaded President Grant to give the boy a pardon for the sake of his family. The president granted the pardon and the man hastened to the prison. The father said to his son, "John, I have good news for you. I have a pardon from President Grant and you may come with me, and see your mother before she

dies.” The son made no response. “Do you understand me, John?” the father continued. “Here’s a pardon for you.” The young man refused to accept the pardon saying that he did not want to be brought under obligation to the political administration. This young man remained in prison for many years because he refused to accept the pardon of President Grant.

- III. There are many men and women who will spend eternity in torment because they refuse to accept the gracious pardon of God. God offers you a pardon from the High Court of Heaven, a pardon written in the blood of Christ. Will you accept it and go free? Or will you reject it and continue under sin’s bondage? We urge you to come and accept it as we stand and sing.

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