

Forgiving the Unforgivable?

Matt. 18:21-35

Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.

“Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.

When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’

And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’

So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. - Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant!

I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

The confusion concerning forgiveness.

Then Peter came up and said
to Him, Lord, how often will my brother sin against me
and I forgive Him?
As many as 7 times?
Matt. 18:21

Peter's confusion about forgiveness

- I should keep a record of offenses?
1 Cor. 13:5b – God's love
"does not take into account
a wrong suffered." (NASB)
"it keeps no record of wrongs (NIV)
"doesn't keep score of the sins of others." (MSG)

Peter's confusion about forgiveness

- There is a limit to forgiveness?
"7 and after that
I don't have to forgive?"
Peter's confusion about forgiveness

- There is a focus on my hurt?

"how often will my brother sin against me?"
Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you 7 times, but 70 times 7. (22)

Can you stretch "grace"
to a breaking point?

God's grace is –

- . Unlimited
- . Inexhaustible
- . Infinite
- . Eternal

... the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us. Eph. 1:7

If we say monsters are beyond forgiving, we give them a power they should never have. Monsters who are too evil to be forgiven, get a stranglehold on their victims; they can sentence their victims to a lifetime of unhealed pain. If they are unforgivable monsters, they are given power to keep their evil in the hearts of those who suffered most.

Lewis Smedes –

Forgive and Forget
The path of forgiveness

1. See the “debt” without excuses.

Whoever conceals his transgression will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy. Prov. 28:13

“Unhealthy” confession of sin

- . Minimize the sin – “I might have misspoken or made a judgment mistake.”
- . Dismiss the hurt or pain it caused.
- . Deflect the blame – point the finger at others.
- . Make excuses – “I’m sorry but..”
- . Be defensive.
- . Comparison with others.
- . I’m sorry you have a problem with me.

Therefore the kingdom of
a heaven may be compared to
a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.
Matt. 18:23

... one was brought to him who owed him 10,000 talents
(24)

10,000 talents = 17 yrs wages for 10,000 men.
The gold of Solomon's temple – 8000 talents
Ten million dollars

And since he could not pay...
(25)

So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him
"Have patience with me
and I will pay you everything." (26)

"Denial" does not bring forgiveness or healing. To repress evil, or to stuff the pain never brings transformation.

Confession – to acknowledge the full responsibility of the debt.
- to clearly see the wrong that has been done.

2. Be set free from the debt without earning it.

And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. Matt. 18:27

"I forgive you"

Nadine Collier whose mother, Ethel Lance, was one of nine people killed in a shooting at an African American church in Charleston, South Carolina, addressing suspect Dylan Roof at a bond hearing.
June 19, 2015

3. Share with others what you have freely received.

And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?
Matt. 18:33

Hoarding comes from fear
- fear of losing what is valuable
- fear of being without
- fear of losing one's identity

Perfect love casts our fear

- no longer hesitate
 in forgiving others
- no longer afraid

... had found a fellow servant who owed him 100 denarii and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, Pay what you owe!" (28)

Two causes of trouble in the "church -

The failure to understand, receive and live out God's unconditional grace and forgiveness and the failure to give it to others."

David Seamonds

- You cannot change them.
- You cannot make them be different.
- You cannot control their choices.
- But you can choose to love them and forgive them.

Are we like the evil servant where we hoard God's grace?

Christ-followers should be
the most forgiving people
in the world.

"GRACE" DISPENSER?

Practical steps to consider in forgiving others.

1. Stay humble seeing your own need for forgiveness.

Forgiven people are humble people. No room for pride in the congregation of forgiven sinners.

A man came to John Wesley – “I could never forgive that person.”

Wesley responded – “Then I hope you never sin. When you refuse to forgive – you burn the bridge you will need someday.”

Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy.

Matt. 5:7

To forgive we must first realize that forgiveness is a gift from God. We are totally incapable on our own without His spiritual prod.

We must come to grips with the fact – even in the midst of our strife, that forgiveness is a powerful witness to the grace of God in our life.

(Mary Horner – “AMEN”)

2. Be tender to the voice of God, resisting a hard heart.

Hard hearts happen when hurt and pain grows within and becomes bitterness.

Love is not easily angered.

1 Cor. 13:5

In a spirit of gentleness...

Gal. 6:1

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you .

Eph. 4:32

A person who forgives is a person closest to the heart of God.

3. See the person with eyes of Jesus.

Hating people is like burning down your house to get rid of rats.

Jesus says – “Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you. Matt.

5:44

Replace resentment with love
“Overcome evil with good.”
Rom. 12:21

Can you see her? Will you let God show you?
Her face instead of her clothes?
Her eyes instead of her body?
Can you see her? Will you let God show you?
A broken heart instead of a hard one
Can you see her? Will you let God show you?
The image of God instead of an object of scorn
Her worth to the Savior instead of her worthlessness to the world
Can you see her? Will you let God show you?
His heart of forgiveness instead of your heart that judges
His blood that covers instead of your rules that condemn
Can you see her? Will you let God show you?
And when you do, What then?

4. Let God be their judge.

The God who is all-wise, good and righteous will be their judge. He doesn't need my help.

One day God will settle the score, balance the books, and everyone will stand before Him to give an account.

“The essence of sin is the refusal to recognize that we are accountable to God at all.”

Oswald Chambers

“Healing comes in relationships when judgment leaves.”

Henry Cloud

5. Release the hurt and pain each time it resurfaces to the Lord for His healing touch.

- To send away
- To let go
- To put away

Resentment – to feel again;
to relive the pain.

Not a “one-time” pill, but like
a diabetic needing daily input.
“No, I distinctly remember forgetting that.”
Clara Barton