

INSIGHT

Forgiveness has both divine and human dimensions. In the divine relationship, forgiveness is, first of all, the gracious act of God by which true believers are put into a right relationship to God and transferred from spiritual death to spiritual life through the sacrifice of Jesus. It is also, in this divine dimension, the ongoing gift of God without which our lives as Christians would be "out of joint" and full of guilt. It is through this divine act of God's grace that true believers are released from being accountable for sins they confess. In terms of a human dimension, forgiveness is that act and attitude towards those who have wronged us which restores relationships and fellowship. Jesus spoke of the human dimension of forgiveness. A firm condition for the receiving of God's forgiveness is the willingness to forgive others. Two places where we see this is in the Lord's Prayer when Jesus says, "*Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors*" (**Matt. 6:12**) and in the parable of the Unforgiving Servant (**Matt. 18:12-35**). Jesus clearly indicated such is the case: "*But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins*" (**Matt. 6:15**). The forgiven life is the forgiving life.

Human forgiveness reflects our experience and understanding of divine forgiveness. We cannot know the Christ of the Cross if we refuse to forgive. Love is what governs forgiveness. Those who love are born of God and know God (**1 John 4:7**). Jesus powerfully demonstrates this teaching on the cross, as He asked for forgiveness for His executioners (**Luke 23:34**). Paul reminded the church at Ephesus of both the grounds of their forgiveness and the basis on which they must forgive one another when he said, "*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*" (**Eph. 4:32**).

The Attitude in Christ Forgiveness

Key Text: **Matthew 6:14**

"For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."

Theme:

The fifth petition in the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6 includes the clause "*as we also have forgiven our debtors.*" Here, our Savior shows us the necessity and importance of forgiveness and how to sustain it in the Lord. God forgives us our wrongs relative to the way we forgive those who wrong us. When we pray for pardon, we must be conscience of how we pardon! If we are to seek mercy from God, we must be ready to show mercy. Why should God should forgive the thousands of talents we owe Him, if we don't forgive the hundreds of denarii others owe us? Christ came as Peace-Maker--not only to reconcile us to God, but to one another. Let us, therefore, not make light of the matter of personal forgiveness. For God forgives us relative to the way we forgive others.

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Do not slander** your brother! Instead, go to him, in private, and humbly speak to him, showing him his fault.
2. **Be ready** to forgive any grievances! We desire spontaneous mercy from the Lord! Therefore, do the same!
3. **Forgive** unconditionally. Conditional forgiveness is not true forgiveness. Learn to simply say "I forgive you!"
4. **Be sincere** in your forgiveness. God wants us to *forgive from the heart!*

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

Forgiveness

I. The Cross Is Forgiveness

A. Its the basis of Christianity

1. His blood shed for *forgiveness* (Mt. 26:28)
2. His message is *forgiveness* (Luke 24:46-47)
3. Belief in Him brings *forgiveness* (Acts 10:43)
4. Jesus is all about forgiveness; His people ought to be all about forgiveness too!

B. The Prodigal Son's Brother (Lk 15:25-32)

1. The parable in its context
 - a. Directed to the Pharisees
 - The Father: God, the common Father
 - The brothers: mankind
 - b. Older brother--reserved and educated
 - c. Younger brother--impulsive, fickle
2. The older brother's disposition
 - a. His envy and complaining
 - he boasted of himself and his virtue
 - he complained of his father
 - he was irritable towards his brother

C. The father's disposition towards the oldest son

- a. He came out when the son wouldn't go into the house
- b. Very controlled, patient, and pleading
 - His love was even evident towards this sour, irritable kid
 - He encouraged him to come in
 - He reassured His love for him
 - He gives him a good reason for the joyous celebration

II. Conclusion

1. Seek to reconcile as the father did
2. His children shall be with him for ever
3. All that is His is ours (Rom. 8:17)
4. Be ready to forgive!

Warm-up:

Have you recently been in a situation where you were hurt by another person and the result was anger and avoidance?

See To It

Matthew 18:21-35

1. Looking at verses 21-22, what is Jesus teaching Peter about the nature of forgiveness? How should we forgive?
2. What prompted Peter to say "up to 7 times?" What does this say about our nature regarding forgiving others?
3. What is the overall theme of this parable? Read Matthew 6:12 for further insight.
4. What major teachings do you see here in this parable?
5. What is your insight to verse 34? Does this mean that punishment is temporary? Explain with Scripture.

Seeing It Closer:

1. How does the ten thousand talents and the hundred pence (denarii) relate to us today?
2. What should be the basis of our need to readily forgive our debtors? What would help us to be a people of forgiveness?

Getting To It:

Go around the room and take turns sharing with each other what this parable has taught you. Pray for each other to be a people filled with compassion and mercy.

100 pence (denarii) is approx. \$15.00

1 Talent (of silver) is approx. \$1,600.00

10,000 talents is approx. 16 million dollars

SMALL GROUP STUDY