

CCC WHY MUST I FORGIVE THEM?

Principles From the Parables - Part 2 of 3

Read Matthew 18:21-35

Several years ago there was an assassination attempt on the life of the leader of the Catholic Church, the Pope. He was shot and after he recovered, he did an amazing thing, he went to the prison to offer forgiveness to the man that tried to kill him. Time magazine did a major story on this: It read. "**Why Forgive?** And that's good question. Why should you or I forgive? It's a question that's been asked for 2000 years. Peter asked it of Jesus verse 21. *"Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times must I forgive my brother when he sins against me. Up to seven times?'"* First, I want to say that Peter is talking about repeated forgiveness here when he ask Jesus how many times. Have you noticed it's easier to forgive a one-time

offense than it is continuous irritation? It seems that we all have an irritating source in our lives -- an irregular person, heavenly sandpaper if you will. Did you know that ninety percent of all resentment occurs in the family arena? That's where it starts -- people we deal with and have contact with on a daily basis.

Now when Peter ask this question of Jesus how many times he has to forgive and then suggest seven times... he's was trying to be very upright, very noble here in making this suggestion. What I mean is Peter was expecting the Lord to be astounded at Peter suggesting seven times. See Jewish law required that you only had to forgive a person three times and Peter in his upright and noble way here suggesting seven times, thought he was being quit gracious in this suggestion. Peter was expecting Jesus to say, "Wow Peter what a godly man you are to

suggest that...!" But the Lord says, "No, Peter not seven times, but seventy-seven times." In reality, Jesus is saying Peter there's no limit to the amount times you need to forgive people. But that's not all that Jesus is saying here Jesus is also pointing out to Peter that if your keeping score how many times you have forgiven someone, it's not really forgiveness that you have given them in the first place. Jesus is saying to you and I today that if you're keeping score, you haven't really forgiven in the first place. So Jesus goes on and tells the story to explain why we must learn to forgive. There's the story of the guy who is hopelessly in debt to a king. The king calls in all of his accounts. It doesn't say how he got in debt but evidently he mismanaged and he owed ten thousand talents. That's twelve million dollars in today's terms. That's Major debt! In those days, bankruptcy was real simple. There was no

chapter 11 or chapter 13. The king would just take the wife, the kids and sell them into slavery and put the man in prison. Simple bankruptcy! That's how they dealt with bankruptcy in those days.

But we see in verse 26, The guy begs, "*The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay everything back.'*" Twelve million bucks and he says, give me a few more days! Repaying \$1,000 bucks a day it would take this guy 30 years to repay his debt.

There's no way he's going to repay it. Absolutely impossible. So out of this parable Jesus has told we get three reasons why we must learn to forgive other people and that's what were going to look at today. Are you ready to get into the message now? The first reason Jesus gives us why: **I NEED TO LEARN TO FORGIVE...**

1. BECAUSE GOD HAS FORGIVEN ME. The king's response, v. 27, "*The servant's master took pity on him, and canceled the debt and let him go.*" No strings attached. Twelve Million forgive... What a king! But that's nothing compared to the forgiveness God has given you and I. The Bible says I owe a debt to God and you do too. Why, because, "*All have sinned.*" The Bible says the debt is so big I could never repay it on my own and neither could you. But God has chosen, in His love, to forgive us, wipe the slate clean, cancel the debts and say, "Let's start a new." That's the good news!

Now in saying that we need to understand that God expects me to do to others what He has done for me. That's the real message for today. He has forgiven me a debt so big I can repay, my sins, and that is the example that I am to forgive other people also.

Think about this... what would you feel like if all your debt was forgiven, wiped clean? You are totally free right now. Some words that come to my mind are... Relief? Joy? Freedom? Gratitude? Now let me ask you this if you had all your debt paid, forgiven... Don't you think you'd be a little bit more gracious to other people? Don't you think you would be easier and quicker to forgive others, if that happened to you, all your debt was forgiven? Then why don't we? Why do we find it hard to forgive... The reason why you have a hard time forgiving others is you don't really feel forgiven yourself. When we look at this parable that Jesus said we look at it and say How could this guy be forgiven such a debt and then turn around and not forgive others. Listen to verse 28 again.. "*But when the servant went out he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denari. 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'll pay you back.' But he refused. Instead he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt."

Imagine what this guy's doing. This guy owes twelve million bucks to his boss and he's got a friend who owes him a hundred denari. Which is about seventeen dollars and he throws him into prison. But the real question to me here Why..? Why did he respond that way? The answer is. Because he really didn't feel forgiven **himself** of that debt he made. So he's not felt the forgiveness of his debt, so he is still foolishly trying to collect money to pay off a twelve million dollar debt.

Now here's the point I want you to grab... The tragedy is that a lot of Christians are living this same way. They have

become believers and in this forgiveness they say, "I'll make it up to You, Lord. You forgave me but don't worry I will make it up to you, I will pay you back. Many believers say, I know I blew it in the past but now I'm going to keep rules, I'm going to keep the rituals. I'm going to overwork myself for you. But God says, "You don't have to do that! The debt was paid in full." That's what my Grace is all about... This guy in this parable he doesn't understand grace. He didn't believe he was forgiven. See, when you believe you are forgiven you will forgive others. When we feel unforgiven we tend to be unforgiving. The ungraced person, the person that doesn't understand grace is always the ungracious person.

Ephesians 4:32 *"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you."* **The key to forgiveness is to recognize how**

much God forgives me everyday. When I feel forgiven I'm going to be forgiving.

The second reason Jesus gives us why: **I NEED TO LEARN TO FORGIVE...**

2. BECAUSE RESENTMENT MAKES ME

MISERABLE If your living a life of resentment your living a life of hell here on earth. Resentment tortures you.

v. 31 *"When the other servants saw what had happened they were greatly distressed and they went and told their master everything that had happened and the master called the servant in and said, 'You wicked servant. I canceled all the 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 until he should pay back all that he owed."* The master said, if that's the way you're going to be -- unforgiving --

then I'm going to be unforgiving. And he hands him over to the jailers. The word "jailer" here literally means "tormentors", torturers. Literally that verse would say the Master turn him over to the torturer, the torture chamber.

Obviously this a symbol of hell but more than that, it's also a symbol of hell on earth. When resentment affects you, it tortures you. It wraps you up in a prison and binds you up, robs you of all your joy and you can't seem to think about anything else. It controls you and not you it... It produces inner conflict. It hurts you more than it does any other person. The other person is totally oblivious to the fact that you're still resenting the issue. Job 21:23 *"Some men stay happy until the day they die. Others have no happiness at all. They live and die with bitter hearts."* Circle "bitter hearts". Let me ask you today... What bitter memory is robbing you of happiness? What hurt are you

still holding on to and it's still hurting you? There's still that sharp jab of pain in your heart. Listen to me... It isn't worth it. Let it go and give it to God. You and I need to learn to forgive, not only because God has forgiven me, but for my own benefit, because resentment makes me miserable.

When we fail to forgive, we lock ourselves in our own jail of torment and hurt. When we fail to forgive, all that happens is we rehearse the hurt over and over and each time it gets bigger and bigger and will continue to hurt us long after it's happened. We think it will be okay in time but all it do is lock ourselves in prison. There are millions of people who are imprisoned by guilt and they are enslaved by anger and anxiety and they are tormented by resentment, year after year. The forgiveness of Christ is the key to unlock the jail. It can set you free. It can give

you a new beginning. For your own sake forgive. Learn to ask forgiveness; learn to offer forgiveness. The torture chamber is self inflicted because I refuse to forgive.

You need to enjoy and employ. Enjoy God's forgiveness, really believe you've been forgiven because then you can forgive other people for your own benefit. The third reason Jesus gives us why: **I NEED TO LEARN TO FORGIVE.**

3. BECAUSE I'LL NEED FORGIVENESS IN THE

FUTURE v. 35 *"This is how my heavenly father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brothers from your heart."* Somebody told John Wesley one time, "I could never forgive that person!" John Wesley said to the person "Then I hope you never sin." If you're going to live the rest of your life in perfection you don't need to forgive anybody else. But forgiveness is a two-way street, don't burn the bridge you've got to walk over in order to get to heaven.

When we pray the Lord's prayer, we say, "*Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors*" – In actuality were saying God, You forgive me as much as I forgive the people around me. The Bible teaches us that we can only receive what we offer to others. We cannot receive what we don't offer to others. The Bible says "*Blessed are the merciful ... (WHY) for they will be shown mercy.*"

Notice that it says, "*Forgive others from your heart*" v. 35. See this Christianity thing isn't just lip-service, it isn't just some intellectual forgiveness, but it is real... it is that emotionally you've got to let them go. I hear people say all the time "I'll forgive but I'm not going to forget." That's not forgiveness.

This parable that Jesus give us is teaching us that forgiveness is a way of life, and it's the only way to live. In this life you're going to be hurt and you're going to hurt

others. You're imperfect and so am I. Jesus in this parable is saying, "We have to live in a constant state of forgiveness, accepting God's forgiveness and offering God's forgiveness to others."

The question comes up then to me, **Is forgiveness fair? Do you let them get away with it?**

No, it's not fair. But nobody said life is fair here on earth because were living in a hurt world with hurting people. The question to consider maybe more like... But is it fair that God forgave you? It's not right for the offender to go away scott-free. Somebody has got to pay for it. A few years ago I was doing some counseling, a lady came to me and poured out her heart. I felt so sorry for her. I hurt for her. She was so consumed with guilt. She told me about how several marriages had failed. She had left one marriage to get into another, left that one to get into

another. She'd had an abortion. She was racked with guilt. I remember sharing with her that Jesus Christ could make a difference in her life and that He was here and wanted to forgive her and that He was willing to forgive her. He was waiting to wipe the slate clean and remove the torment in her life. She said, "But it's not fair! Somebody's got to pay for all the things I've done wrong. It's not fair for me to go away scott-free. Somebody's got to pay." I said, "Somebody has paid. His name is Jesus Christ." That's what God came to earth to do. That's why the cross was there. The Bible says I owe a debt so big to God I could never repay it -- not in a million or billion years! So God says, I'll pay it. The Bible says, "*The wages of sin is death.*" So Jesus Christ came to earth to die for me and for you. God has already paid for your sins. You just need to accept it. That's the good news! That's what it's all about!

I don't have to go around nailing myself to the cross all the time because Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross for me. He was hung up for my hang ups. That is good news. The good news is that your sins have already been paid for. You don't have to pay for them twice. Forgiveness is free. God offers it. But don't get the wrong idea out of this message on forgiveness... Forgiveness is free but it's not cheap. It cost Jesus Christ His life. **(SLOW HERE)** Forgiveness can only occur when the person who has been offended volunteers to assume the hurt, to handle the burden, to carry it. That only happens when you can forgive. You can only forgive when you volunteer to assume the hurt, to not retaliate, to not get even, to not seek revenge. But to say, I'm just going to absorb it! In this story the king assumes the debt of his

servant but in your situation the King of Kings has assumed your debt.

Do I need to forgive anybody? The Bible says I need to because I've been forgiven by God, resentment makes me miserable and I'm going to need more forgiveness in the future. The question then becomes, Who do I need to forgive? Here is one way to find out...

I call it **the blame test** -- Do you blame anybody else in the world for your unhappiness? Who is that... who are you blaming? That is an indication of resentment. Blame is an indication of bitterness. You need to let it go and forgive.

The bitterness test -- Have I been keeping score? Is there a mental balance in my mind that every time they do "something" I say "They owe me one"? Some of you, in your marriage, have had a partner who made a major mistake in your marriage. You are still holding it over

their head. You are an unpleasable person because in your mind, no matter what they do it's all just repayment. No matter how good they are to you, you're saying, "They owe it to me." You are unpleasable, because you won't forgive. You are killing the marriage, not the other person. You're doing it by your unforgiveness. You've never let them off the hook and you're holding in resentment and you've become unpleasable to the point that they want to say, "What's the use! I'll never repay!" In your mind you're saying, "You're right! You never will!" If you want to save your marriage, you better let go and never bring it up again!

That applies to a lot of different areas of life. Maybe you were neglected as a child. Maybe you were abused as a child, maybe by your parents. Maybe you never could get that love that you felt like you needed. Nobody did

because none of us had perfect parents. You don't give it perfectly to your kids. Nobody has been perfectly loved in this world because we're all imperfect. Maybe you had a brother or sister who hurt you, who teased you, who was jealous of you, who went past you, and you've resented them. Maybe you had a friend who was disloyal and you've resented them. If the truth were known some of you feel cheated in your marriage. Your partner has not lived up to your expectations and you think you've got a bum deal. False advertising. What you thought you were getting into when you got into the marriage was not at all what reality really is. You feel your needs haven't been met, you've allowed grudges to build up and you are killing the relationship. You need to forgive. You need to let go. You need to quit holding a grudge and being an unpleasable person.

The behavior test -- Do you ever find yourself reacting toward someone, not because of what they've done, but because they remind you of somebody else you resent? That is an indication that you need to learn to forgive. You are taking it out on the wrong person. Often what happens is this: resentment against your parent, whom you were never able to express that resentment to, was held in and now anytime your spouse happens to act like that parent, you transfer all the years of resentment onto that person and blow up! What you're reacting to is not really their fault, it's just that they remind you of somebody else that you never dealt with. You need to let that go. You need to offer forgiveness and you need to accept forgiveness. A past relationship is destroying a present one. You've got two options to deal with your hurt.

I can either rehearse it or I can release it. I can rehearse it and go over and over it in my mind and be resentful and try to retaliate and figure out ways to get even. Or I can release it and experience God's forgiveness through Christ, in my own life. I can then offer that forgiveness to those who've hurt me. That's why you need to learn to forgive.

Prayer:

Some of you need to make a list of people you need to forgive and you need to forgive them in front of God and write it off! Maybe you need to go make some restitution, tell that husband or wife, "I'm never going to bring this issue up again. It's not ammunition. I will not hold it against you any more." God has forgiven me so much. No one will ever hurt you more than you've hurt God! He's forgiven you so you need to forgive them.

God says resentment just makes you miserable.

You're going to need forgiveness in the future. Pray this prayer in your heart, "Dear God, I need Your forgiveness. Help me to understand how much You love me and how much You have forgiven me. I ask You to forgive all the things I've ever done wrong. I ask You to forgive me for being unforgiving to others." If someone comes to mind in your mental picture just name that person specifically.

"Lord, I know I have a debt to You so much greater than any debt people can have to me and yet You've forgiven me. You love me. Lord, I know I'm going to need more forgiveness in the future and I know that resentment only makes me miserable, so today I want to let them go and I don't want to use them as ammunition and I don't want to have a mental balance in my life. I want to stop reacting to that person in my past so I can start relating to that person

in my present." If you've never invited Jesus Christ into your life say, "Jesus Christ, come into my heart today. Fill me with Your love and Your forgiveness and Your peace and Your purpose and Your power."

Thank You, Father. Help us to walk in forgiveness.

In Jesus' name. Amen.