

FORGIVING OTHERS

Intro

1. No greater challenge for the Christian than to forgive those who have hurt us. Sometimes it is difficult to get over the inadvertent slights, unintentional offenses much less the deliberate, mean-spirited things that may be done upon occasion.
2. Jesus: "Father, forgive them ..." (Lk 23:34).
3. Stephen: "Lord, do not charge them with this sin" (Ac 7:60).

1. The Ability To Forgive

A. A mark of true love - I Cor 13:5 - "Thinks no evil" (NKJ); "does not take into account a wrong suffered" (NAS).

1. "As in a ledger or note-book" - Robertson.
2. "To think or consider; to ponder; let one's mind dwell on" - Willis.

B. A condition of our own forgiveness - Mt 6:14-15; Mk 11:25-26.

1. Jesus amplifies only one facet of the model prayer - forgiveness.
2. Mk - "Whenever you stand praying ...". Such forgiveness can be granted by us on our own behalf but not on God's behalf.

C. A distinction between Christians and the world - Mt 5:43-48.

1. It was not the Law but tradition which taught the Jews to hate their enemies.
2. Beyond forgiveness the Christian is to love, bless, do good, pray for those who are **actively** seeking our harm. This shows what the Christian is able to do independently of God's own action toward the enemy.
3. "**That** you may be sons ..." (v 45-47). Christians are called to a higher standard than the rest of the world. We are after God's nature, "perfect as He is perfect."

2. The Unforgiving Servant - Mt 18:21-35

A. Peter is concerned about repeated offenses. Sometimes we feel there is a limit on how much we can forgive someone. But we must consider our accumulated sins against God. Do we wish such a quota to be placed upon us?

B. Note, however, the element of penitence, contrition: the servant begged for time to pay and this caused the master to be moved with compassion (v 27). In Lk's parallel account, the forgiveness is based upon repentance (Lk 17:3-4).

C. The forgiveness must be "from the heart" - Mt 18:35.

1. Eph 4:32 - "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, **just as God in Christ also forgave you.**"

2. Col 3:12-13 - Attitudes leading to forgiveness: tender mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering ..."even as **Christ forgave you ...**".

3. Practical

A. "Do I **have** to forgive someone if they haven't apologized or repented?"

1. This sounds begrudging.

2. We must be **eager** to forgive, but we cannot pardon for God the sins committed against Him.

3. Jesus teaches us to rebuke those who sin against us (Lk 17:3) and confront them with their fault (Mt 18:15-17). Instructions are given if correction not made.

B. "I have tried to forgive but I can't **forget** what happened."

1. It is impossible to forget. The pain and hurt may linger, but we are commanded to put the offense aside and get on with the relationship.

2. The pain and hurt of bitterness and grudge-bearing will be far worse.

C. "Must I take back my adulterous mate because they asked for forgiveness?"

1. Marriages must be built upon forgiveness.

2. But God, Himself, gave the right of divorce/remarriage **without** the condition of penitence on the part of the guilty.

3. Some sins have stiff consequences: murder might mean the loss of one's life repentance notwithstanding. Celibacy is the **punishment** for adultery; God does not allow the put-away guilty party to remarry. He/she must bear this burden, not the innocent party who exercised a God-given right.