

# Sermons

## Forgiving Others

🕒 September 27, 2015

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**Intro: Our responsibility to forgive** (vertical that defines the horizontal). This morning we discussed forgiveness of sins. We recognized from the scriptures that forgiveness is a great blessing. When God forgives he pardons our offense, removes the penalty, and cast the sin itself, far from us (as the far as the east is from the west). In that He bestows a favor on us. Gives us mercy, rather than judgment. We also noticed that our forgiveness is conditional – before God forgives, men must repent.

**I. Forgive to be Forgiven:** There is another clear condition of forgiveness revealed in scripture.

**A. Matt 6:12**– *And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.* The word “as” is important here. It defines the extent of the forgiveness God provides for all of us. Even though Jesus died to pay the penalty for my sin, and even though I repent of it, if I fail to forgive others, I can anticipate that God will not forgive me. Jesus said it more than once.

**B. Luke 6:37** – *“Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.”*

**C. Mark 11:25-26** – *“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. 26 But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”* The apostles also made this connection....

**D. Col 3:12-13** – *12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*

## **II. Understanding the scope of my responsibility to**

**forgive:** We also noticed this morning that sin is ultimately against God, and it is God who forgives (remits) sin. So how then, can I forgive fellow man? How is my forgiveness to be like God’s forgiveness?

**A. Forgiveness flows from the proper attitude, and a desire to be like Christ.** As we studied earlier, Jesus’ response to personal evil against Him was not revenge, but submissiveness. He placed his confidence in God, the Father, to provide justice. **1 Peter 2:23** – *who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;* those who seek to promote themselves, protect their rights, and come out on top,, will have trouble with forgiveness.

**1. Eph 4:31-32** – *Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*

a. *"Bitterness"* refers to bitter hatred, animosity, i.e., holding a grudge.

b. *"Wrath"* is passionate anger that results in verbal abuse or violence.

c. *"Anger"* in this passage is violent passion

d. *"Clamor"* refers to loud arguments and quarrels.

e. *"Evil speaking"* is slander, speech injurious to another's good name, defamation, or abusive speech.

f. *"Malice"* is an evil disposition of mind, the desire to hurt someone. These actions and attitudes work against forgiveness and reconciliation. If you desire to forgive another, you must reign over these sins, seeking what is best for the other person. The forgiving person is approachable, leaving the door open for reconciliation.

**B. Forgiveness flows from a desire for reconciliation:**

**Matthew 18:15 -15** *"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.*

Jesus had just finished telling the parable of the lost sheep, expressing God's heart toward the lost. (He leaves 99 to save one.) and then says, *"moreover if your brother sins against you go to him.."* The forgiving person is not merely passive in waiting for the offender to repent; he actively seeks the repentance of the one who wronged him.

**C. Forgiveness is not limited by the extent of the sin,** or the frequency of the offense. After Jesus taught the disciples what to do to restore an offending brother in

Matthew 18, Peter inquired, *"Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"* (18:21). Peter thought he was overstating the case and being generous. Jesus replied *"I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."* (18:22). So are we to keep count and refuse to forgive on the 491<sup>st</sup> offense? No Jesus is expressing the limitlessness of my forgiveness. If my brother repents I must forgive, because his sin cannot exhaust my mercy – just like God's mercy.

1. Jesus goes to tell a memorable parable about a man who owed a huge, un-payable debt (10,000 talents may translate to 16 million dollars) who was completely forgiven the debt. He had a creditor who owed him a manageable debt (100 denarii translates to about 100 days wages), yet he would not even allow him a grace period—throwing him in prison. Jesus' application: **Matt 18:32-35** –*Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33 And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' 34 And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. 35 So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."*  
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**D. Forgiveness demands a commitment to release the offender.** You notice the further condition Jesus mentions in v. **35 – forgive "from the heart"**. There is a difference between lip forgiveness, and heart forgiveness. True forgiveness demands a commitment to release the offender in every way that I can. (I cannot release him from the moral guilt of his sin, and he may owe a debt to the law as well. But my forgiveness must be more than just sentimental talk, or hypocritical

appeasing. Jeremiah described God as one who would forgive sins and remember them no more (31:34) So must also **forget** about the offense and commit to not hold it against the person again. The person who forgives another will not ask, "Does this mean that I must shake his hand, go out the same door, speak to him, etc?" Just as God's forgiveness of our sins heals the breach, so must ours.

### **E. Does God demand that I forgive unconditionally?**

There is a popular sentiment and image of Christianity that has done much harm to Jesus' cause. Many see Christians as ones who forgive those who sin against them even if they do not repent, and even before they acknowledge their sin – unconditionally. Is this what God demands? I affirm that it is not only NOT what Christ demands, but this concept and practice is harmful to God's purposes.

1. We recognize, first, that God's forgiveness is conditional upon repentance. **1 John 1:9** – *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

2. Even so, our forgiveness is conditional. Jesus stated in **Luke 17:3**, *"If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him."* Here, the meaning is clear. The word "if" (Grk. *ean*) introduces the condition for a rebuke and for granting forgiveness. If (*subjunctive*) a person sins, we must (*imperative*) rebuke him, and if (*subjunctive*) he repents, we must (*imperative*) forgive him. This is as clear a statement as you will find on the subject. Forgiveness is conditioned upon repentance—and this is one of the same criteria that God requires before He forgives sin. This does not lessen the graciousness or mercy of us or God. It reflects the true intention and desire of forgiveness – a new

relationship! How can a new relationship be established with one who refuses to repent. Jesus said in Matthew 18 he should be regarded as a publican and sinner (outsider).

3. Finally, I would make the case that it is harmful to a person to forgive him without requiring repentance. Sin requires a rebuke. Ignoring sin teaches sinners that sin does not bring consequences. It violates the concept of holiness and fellowship when one can have the benefits of the relationship while living in unholiness. If I forgive then I must forget, never bringing the sin up again. If that is done before the person repents, how then will I bring him back to God?

4. Conditional forgiveness does not diminish my mercy or God's mercy. The notion that Christians cannot ever hate, be angry, or lack forgiveness is an unbiblical concept. God Himself is eternally angry with sin, but His anger, hatred, and unwillingness to forgive are tied to His holiness, or truth. He loves, hates, and is angry in appropriate ways. Our task as believers is to imitate this. Be angry with and hate sin appropriately (Rom. 12:9) and love what good appropriately.

5. I believe it is important for us to understand that forgiveness is not just a unilateral, internal effort to get our emotions under control. By that I mean we must always be open and, by God's grace, eager to extend forgiveness. **I must never be the obstacle to forgiveness and reconciliation.** By God's grace and power we can and must overcome anger and resentment. We must release our bitterness to God, commit our adversaries to Him, and always be ready and willing to forgive, and we must always be ready and hopeful for reconciliation. Therefore,

when the offender does request forgiveness we can immediately say, "Forgiven!" There is no deliberation because we have been ready and eager to grant them forgiveness.

6. Before we leave the subject of the extent of our responsibility we should understand that not every offense requires repentance. We are often too thin-skinned and self-focused. We are easily offended when someone says something, or fails to say something. We misread, or over-read people's intentions, and do not give anyone the benefit of the doubt. We immediately require that they repent or apologize for offending us. Many offenses are unintentional, and instead of becoming offended and requiring repentance we should allow our love for them to cover many offenses.

**a. 1 Peter 4:8** – *And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."*

**b. Prov 19:11** – A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense. (NIV). It takes a wise heart to know when to rebuke and when to overlook.

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