

Forgiveness

Zion Book Camp

2022-12-02

Matthew 6:14–15 (ESV)—"For if you **forgive** others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also **forgive** you, but if you do not **forgive** others their trespasses, neither will your Father **forgive** your trespasses."

Matthew 18:21–35 (ESV)–The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

"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?" 22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times. 23 "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. 24 When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 25 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. 26 So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' 27 And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. 28 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.' 29 So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' 30 He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. 31 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. 32 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.*"

1. Six Reasons We Do Not Forgive

a. First, being made in the image and likeness of God, we value and want justice.

i. **Romans 2:14–16** (ESV) "For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. 15 They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them...."

ii. **Matthew 7:12 (The Golden Rule)**—"So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

iii. However, our sinful nature perverts justice. We are lenient with those who are like us and harsh with those who differ.

1. our sinful nature can make us fierce and implacable. We cannot be appeased.

2. We want "the pound of flesh".

a. Spoken by Shylock, a moneylender, in *The Merchant of Venice*. Shylock is an outcast of Venice solely because he is Jewish.

b. Second, we have been hurt deeply.

i. In Alexander Dumas's wonderful book, *The Count of*

Monte Cristo, the Count seeks revenge against the three

men who hurt him deeply and dramatically altered the course of his life. Dantès was the classic innocent victim of people with evil desires. He was falsely imprisoned for 14 years. The love of his life eventually innocently married one of the conspirators. Dantès's beloved father died of starvation because Dantès was not there to care for him. Dantès escaped from prison and acquired incredible wealth. He purposed to avenge himself on the three men who conspired against him. Out of prison and fabulously wealthy Dantès masquerades as the Count of Monte Cristo.

- ii. **Driver Kills 4:** Ashley Rene Williams, 30, pleaded guilty to charges of second-degree murder and gross vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated in connection with the fatality crash on **May 5, 2020**, on San Pasqual Valley Road.
- iii. Norma Espinoza, mother to both boys and daughter to Camacho, said, "I think one day I might forgive her, but I don't think I'm ready to do that now. It still hurts."

1. <https://www.cbs8.com/article/news/crime/woman-sentenced-25-years-life-escondido-crash-that-killed-four-people/509-38228d36-68ad-4c9b-98eb-3ea5acb76a09>

c. Third, we do not understand the depth of our sin.

d. Fourth, we do not understand the terrible consequences of our own sin.

i. SDSU student who destroyed woman's life.

ii. Baron Danglars has been kidnapped and held for ransom by the infamous brigand Luigi Vampa. Dantès has engineered Danglars' abduction. Starving in captivity, Danglars finally comes to a point of repentance. He hears a voice both strange and familiar ask him: "do you repent?" The voice belonged to a man enveloped in a long cloak who stepped from behind a stone column. It is Edmund Dantès. Danglars responds in the affirmative but asks the man obscured in the shadow of a large rock, "Who are you?" asks Danglars. Dantès responds: "I am he whom you sold in dishonor. I am he whose betrothed you prostituted. I am he upon whom you trampled that you

might raise yourself to fortune. I am he whose father you condemned to die of hunger. I am he whom you also condemned to starvation and who yet forgives you because he hopes to be forgiven."¹ Because of the actions of Dantés a mother has killed her son and then committed suicide. They were the wife and son of Monsieur Villefort, one of the conspirators against whom Dantès had sought revenge. Their deaths were the unintended consequences of his desire for justice, for revenge. Dantès has come to realize that in his quest for revenge he has gone too far.

iii. Like Danglars in the story we do not understand the terrible ramifications of our sin.

1. We think our sin goes out one foot and then dies.

In truth, our sins may circle the globe many times and live on for many years.

¹ *The Count of Monte Cristo*, chptr. 116

- e. **Fifth**, we wrongly equate forgiveness with condoning.
- f. **Sixth**, forgiveness requires too much humility.
 - i. A rabbi was once asked: "why don't people try to know God?" His answer: "Too few are willing to go that low."
 - ii. Hosea and Gomer
 - iii. A cuckolded husband

2. Three Reasons Why We Must Forgive

a. It is a commandment.

- i. "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." *Matthew 6:14-15*
- ii. "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 times seven" *Matthew 18: 21-22.*
- iii. "As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive." *Colossians 3:13 (ESV)*

b. **Second**, we continually need the Father's forgiveness.

- i. **James 2:13 (ESV)**—"For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment."
- ii. In **THE MERCHANT OF VENICE**, Shylock, a Jewish moneylender, demands the payment of a debt by Antonio, a gentile anti-semite.
 1. Antonio was late in paying the money borrowed from Shylock. The debt must be paid by a pound of Antonio's flesh.
 2. Shylock refuses to accept late payment in full or even 3x the borrowed sum.

3. He wants revenge against Antonio.
 4. He insists on his pound of flesh.
 5. The pound of flesh is equivalent to a death sentence b/c Shylock wants to take it from near the heart.
 6. However, under Venetian law a non-citizen (which is Shylock) who conspires to take the life of a Venetian citizen must forfeit all his wealth and property.
 7. Now Shylock needs mercy.
- iii. *John Calvin* has this explanation: " Forgive us, as we forgive The reason is, that God will not be ready to hear us, unless we also show ourselves ready to grant forgiveness to those who have offended us. If we are not harder than iron, this exhortation ought to soften us, and render us disposed to forgive offenses. (445) Unless God pardon us every day many sins, we know that we are ruined in innumerable ways: and on no other condition does he admit us to pardon, but that we pardon our brethren whatever offenses they have committed against us. Those who refuse to forget the injuries which have been done to them, devote themselves willingly and deliberately to destruction, and knowingly prevent God from forgiving them."
- c. **Third**, we have been forgiven
- i. **1 Corinthians 6:19–20 (ESV)**—"You are not your own, for you were bought with a price."
 - ii. We did not deserve our forgiveness.

- iii. We will never deserve our forgiveness.
- iv. We will never earn our forgiveness.
- v. The more we realize our own need for God's forgiveness, the more we are willing to forgive others. We do not forgive if we think we do not ourselves need forgiveness. If we see ourselves in the right without a need for God's mercy, we are often merciless. Self-righteousness creates a hard heart prone to carry grudges and to withhold forgiveness. The refusal to forgive has two sources: we are angry with God for the way He has exercised his sovereignty in our lives, or we fail to see our own vileness. It is reported that a General Oglethorpe once said to the great pastor John Wesley , "I never forgive, and I never forget." Wesley said to him, "Then, Sir, I hope you never sin."

3. The Benefits of Forgiving

a. **First**, until we learn to forgive this way, we will never fully understand the wondrous miracle of God's continual forgiveness of us. We will tend to take that forgiveness lightly. Or think that perhaps we deserve the forgiveness just a little bit. Or that our sin was really not that bad.

b. **Second**, an unforgiving heart sabotages our relationship with God.

i. Anger against God is often the underlying reason we do not forgive.

1. we resent God's exercise of His sovereignty.

ii. An unforgiving heart moves us far from God's heart.

iii. It makes it difficult to understand and love God's heart.

iv. It wars against the Holy Spirit

1. When the Samaritans would not receive Jesus, the brothers James and John asked for permission to rain down fire upon them.

2. Jesus "turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of Spirit you are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." *Luke 9:55*

3. **Psalm 51:11-12 ESV**—"Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me **the joy of your salvation**, and uphold me with a willing spirit."

v. **ANALOGY:** clogged sink

c. Third, an unforgiving heart hinders our spiritual growth.

- i. It is the flesh warring against the Spirit.
- ii. It is like trying to suck juice through a pinched straw.
- iii. "See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled;" *Hebrews 12:15* ESV

d. Fourth, an unforgiving heart sabotages our relationship with other people.

- i. "So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5: 23-24).
- ii. "Hurt people hurt people."

e. Fifth, it weakens, and perhaps destroys, our desire and ability to humbly share the gospel with others.

- i. *2 Corinthians 5:20–21 (ESV)*—"we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

- ii. We may foolishly and subconsciously think we *deserved* our salvation, but others do not.
 - iii. Jesus is the Father's ambassador. He left heaven **alone** and entered hostile territory for the purpose of wooing us to the Father, even though it cost Him His life.
- f. **Sixth, it frees the person who hurt you to move forward.**
- i. **Dr. Karl Menninger**, a well-known psychiatrist, once said that if he "could convince the patients in psychiatric hospitals that their sins were forgiven, 75 percent of them could walk out the next day." ²
 - ii. **Jesus went to Peter** and re-appointed him to lead the disciples and recharged and reinvigorated him for the ministry.
- g. **Seventh, it frees the unforgiving person from a hellish prison.**
- i. "It's one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself: to forgive someone."—*Writer Maya Angelou*
 - ii. Menninger's book, *Reflections on Forgiveness and Spiritual Growth*, contains a chapter about the findings from a national survey on Americans' thoughts about forgiveness:
 - More than 83% reported that they would need God's help in order to forgive someone.

² <https://www.guideposts.org/better-living/positive-living/the-healing-power-of-forgiveness>

- Only 15% indicated they could forgive someone on their own.
 - People who tend to be forgiving report more satisfaction in life.
 - Forgiveness can set people free from their troubles and hardship.
- iii. **Analogy:** tying a noose around your neck, throwing the rope over a tree limb, and then pulling as hard as you can, thereby hanging yourself.
1. An unforgiving spirit has two unusual features.
 - a. *First*, it is a prison we build by ourselves and with our own hands.
 - b. *Second*, it locks from the *inside*
- iv. Until you forgive you allow the person, you're upset with to control your life,—even if that person is deceased.
- v. Clinical psychologist **Dr. Charlie Long's** statement to me on 2022-07-03
1. Many of his patients are trapped in anger and resentment against someone who has wronged them, usually (but not always) another family member.
- vi. Story of a dear friend who was trapped in an unforgiving spirit toward an emotionally abusive, hypercritical father.
1. Led to chronic clinical depression and heavy drinking.

2. He forgave his dead father, and that freed him.

vii. **Police officer who killed the woman's only child.**

1. On the one hand the desire for revenge was eating up the mother inside.

2. On the other hand the officer was being eaten alive by the shooting.

h. A failure or refusal to forgive is often due to our anger. The Bible warns us that anger gives the devil a foothold in our thoughts and heart.

i. **Ephesians 4:26–27 (ESV)**—"Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil."

4. **WHEN MUST WE FORGIVE?**

a. The scripture suggests that a forgiving heart is a prerequisite to being forgiven.

b. We must be in a state always in which we are ready to repent. We must also always be in a state in which we are ready to forgive regardless of whether the wrongdoer has asked for forgiveness. Remember: God is slow to anger and quick to forgive.

c. **Luke 17:3–4 (ESV)**—"If your brother sins, rebuke him, **and if he repents, forgive him**, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him."

i. This passage is *not* setting down a pre-condition for forgiveness. Rather, it is speaking to the hard-hearted brother who won't forgive, or is reluctant to forgive,

when a repentant brother asks for forgiveness.

- ii. **GOLDEN RULE:** Matthew 7:12 (ESV)–“So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”
 - 1. This is identical to the Second Great Commandment that we love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

5. APPLICATION:

- a. Jesus slid across the couch, but for Him the cross was the couch.
- b. Slide across the couch!

6. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DON'T FORGIVE?

- a. Sin makes man guilty and brings judgment.
- b. Forgiveness is offered by God only on the ground of Christ's death.
- c. Confession of sin is necessary to receive God's forgiveness.
 - i. *1 John 1:9*
- d. Forgiving one another is an essential part of receiving forgiveness for ourselves.
- e. **Judicial Forgiveness:**
 - i. **Colossians 2: 11-15** "In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, **having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.** He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him."
 - ii. Hebrews 10:10-14
 - iii. God delights in showing mercy:
 - 1. **Micah 7:18–19 (ESV)**—"Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression

for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea."

- f. It is sin to have an unforgiving spirit, and God cannot extend **PARENTAL FORGIVENESS** to us until we confess that sin and forsake it.
 - i. **Analogy:** a man cheats on his wife. The relationship is ruined until he confesses and she then forgives him.
 - ii. God requires His children to forgive because we are surrounded by covenantal relationships:
 1. Christ died for us: the blood of the New Covenant
 2. Marriage is a covenantal relationship.
 3. Our relationship to our children grows out of our covenantal relationship with our wives.
 4. Relationships with other believers grow out of **our and their** covenantal relationship with Jesus Christ.

7. **NOW LET'S TAKE TIME TO CONFESS AND REPENT**

- a. Break into groups of 3 or 4
- b. Repent among yourselves
- c. Pray for one another
- d. I will re-assemble you and pray for us all.