

Series: Choices

CHOOSING TO FORGIVE

MATTHEW 18:23-25

Text:

Introduction:

Of all the commands given to us in the Word of God the one that many of us struggle with is this one:

Ephesians 4:31-32

³¹ *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: ³² And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

Forgiveness is God's gift to us that frees us and others from the weight and burden broken relationships.

Forgiveness clears away the hurts, betrayals, and disappointments that so often mark our lives.

If we want to live a happy and fulfilled life—the life that God desires for us—we must find a way to deal with our wounded hearts and spirits because of hurts, betrayals and disappointments.

We must free ourselves of the weights that life throws upon us. God's answer is forgiveness. We must learn to truly forgive!

In our text the Lord gives us a parable on forgiveness.

It shows us the necessity of forgiveness and also the consequences of unforgiveness.

Many today say they forgive others and yet they take every opportunity possible to belittle the one who has offended them.

I want to consider three things this morning as we think about choosing forgiveness.

Note:

1. THE CHARACTER OF FORGIVENESS

Ephesians 4:32

³² *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

Note:

A. Forgiveness is a Requirement

We read in Matthew 6:9-15 the account of the disciples requesting of the Lord to teach them to pray.

The Lord's response was what people often refer to as the Lord's prayer.

Actually this was just a model or a pattern of prayer.

Note Matthew 6:12:

Matthew 6:12

¹² And **forgive** us our debts, **as we forgive** our debtors.

The Lord went on to give further instruction on forgiveness because it is so important.

Note Matthew 6:14-15:

Matthew 6:14-15

¹⁴ For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: ¹⁵ But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

The facts are simple – if we are not forgiving of others, or Heavenly Father will not forgive us!

Note not only the Forgiveness is a Requirement but also:

B. Forgiveness is a Response

The word forgiveness is used 143 times in the New Testament. It is a legal term which means “to release a person from an obligation.” In the context of finances, it means to cancel a debt.

A person forgiven by God will become increasingly a more forgiving person.

As we forgive others, God frees us of the weight and burden of unforgiveness.

Forgiveness is a decision we make. It is an act of our will. It is a choice.

Unforgiveness is thinking that the offender owes us; I am going to make you pay by hating you, slandering you; I'll will get others on my side who share my bitterness; I'll make you regret that you ever hurt me.

Forgiveness is thinking, “You don't owe me; I'm not looking for you to repay me, I'm not trying to get even, I'm letting it go.”

Note not only the “Character of Forgiveness” but also:

2. THE CAUSES OF WHY PEOPLE DON'T PRACTICE FORGIVENESS

Matthew 18:21-22

²¹ Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? ²² Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

Too often people cling to all kinds of silly reasons for not forgiving others.

Note some of them:

A. Our Hurt is Too Big

Remember the bigger our hurt the more we have to get rid of.

Our pain will not get any smaller if we hold on to it.

That's why we read in Ephesians 4:31:

Ephesians 4:31

³¹ *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:*

Some believe that “time heals all wounds.” Time heals nothing.

If you are waiting and wallowing in your hurt, then, now is the time to forgive.

Another reason:

B. Our Heart is Too Broken

Many say, “I will forgive them when they say they are sorry.”

You may be waiting a long time and life is too short to wait for that time to come.

Your offended may never ask for forgiveness so don't wait for it.

Only forgiveness can mend your broken heart.

Bitterness and resentment doesn't hurt anyone but the individual who is carrying it around.

Another might say, “I can't forgive if I can't forget.”

The truth is – “You won't forget UNTIL you forgive.”

When we forgive it means that we let God do the healing of our hearts.

Note the words of Joseph:

Genesis 41:51

⁵¹ *And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house.*

Another reason people often offer is:

C. Our Hope Is Too Battered

How many of us have ever thought, “If I forgive him or her, they are only going to do it again”?

Remember justice belongs to the Lord.

He will make the guilty pay.

2 Thessalonians 1:6

⁶ *Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;*

Romans 12:19

¹⁹ *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*

Justice and revenge is God responsibility.

As the Lord was hanging on the cross He said “Father forgive them.”

We MUST choose to forgive.

Note not only the Character and Causes but lastly:

3. THE CHOICE OF FORGIVENESS (MATT 18:23-35)

Matthew 18:23-35

²³ *Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.*

²⁴ *And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵ But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. ²⁶ The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. ²⁷ Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. ²⁹ And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. ³⁰ And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. ³¹ So when his*

fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. ³² Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: ³³ Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? ³⁴ And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. ³⁵ So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Note:

A. A Parable on Forgiveness

The Lord gave this parable about a king who was settling up his accounts.

One man owed the king's 1000 talents which was a sum that this man could never repay.

We too are all debtors to God.

We have nothing which will cause God to accept us.

The very best that we have to offer – “our righteousness” is nothing more than filthy rags.

The truth is that:

- We deserve judgment, and God has made forgiveness possible.
- We deserve death, and God has offered us life.
- We deserve Hell, but God has provided us a way to Heaven.

Note not only the parable of forgiveness but also:

B. The Perils of Not Forgiving

When a person will not forgive others, that person is lacking in God's forgiveness of them.

Unforgiveness destroys people.

Note gain Matthew 18:28:

Matthew 18:28

²⁸ But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

This was a very small amount in comparison to what he owed the king.

You would think this man who had been forgiven such a great debt would have been willing to forgive. But he was not.

Note what it will cost us in not forgiving:

- Shattered Relationships

This was one of the man's fellowservants.

No doubt they had spent time together, ate together, laughed together, and enjoyed each other's company.

But unforgiveness destroyed their relationship

Unforgiveness also will cost us with:

- Shattered Reputations

When this man would not listen to the pleas of his debtor he had the man cast into prison.

His fellowservants were outraged at his unforgiving attitude.

So they went directly to the king and told him what had happened.

The forgiven servant lost all credibility and integrity with his fellowservants.

When he was brought back before the king he faced humiliation.

The king said—“O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?”

Unforgiveness also will cost us with:

- Shattered Results

The king reversed his decision and reinstated his debt.

The king did what the servant had tried to do to his debtor—put him into prison.

The king gave the servant justice instead of mercy.

We all need mercy.

The servant got his just reward.

Close:

Forgiveness makes us live happier and healthier lives.

No wonder God says we are to forgive. God's desire is that we practice forgiveness.

We are not able to carry unforgiveness. God never intended for us to do so. We cannot do what God has called us to do if we live in unforgiveness. Our burdens would be too great.

Forgiveness truly is a CHOICE THAT WILL CHANGE YOUR LIFE forever!