

The Sermon on the Mount Living In Forgiveness

Matt 6:12-14, 18:21-35

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[**Illustration** - A visitor from across the mountain leaned on the rail fence, watching his old friend plow. "I don't like to butt in," he finally said, "but you could save yourself a lot of work by saying 'gee' and 'haw' to that mule instead of just tuggin' on them lines." The old timer pulled a big handkerchief from his pocket and mopped his brow. "Yep, I know that," he agreed, "but this mule kicked me six years ago, and I ain't spoke to him since."]

Forgiveness Is . . .

A. A Practice That Must Be Repeated (vs 12; Matthew 18:21-22) [- *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.* - Forgiveness is essential for each and every Christian. It is a great comfort for us to know that we have been forgiven by God. But it is equally essential that we understand that we must learn to forgive as we have been forgiven. It would be virtually impossible for someone to be a Christian and for them not to know that God commands them to forgive. That's right forgiveness is commanded in the Bible.]

[The apostles of our Lord, in walking with Him through His earthly ministry heard Jesus teach about forgiveness. They watched Jesus practice and demonstrate forgiveness. They saw the power and persuasion of forgiveness. They came to understand that while God commands us to forgive, there are far greater and more compelling reasons to forgive. They learned to desire to forgive by waking with our Lord Jesus Christ. So much so that the Bible records,]

[Matthew 18:21-22 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? ²²Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.]

[Peter thought he was being extraordinarily generous with his offer to forgive seven times. But our Lord said, don't just be extraordinary in your forgiveness be supernatural in your forgiveness. Jesus said forgive and repeat, forgive and repeat, and forgive and repeat up to 490 times in a day. Now that's a lot of forgiveness.]

[Jesus is not trying to set a number upon our forgiveness. What our Lord is really trying to say is that we need to have a character of forgiveness within us. We just need to be ready and willing to forgive and forgive again. Why? Because that is who God is, it is our Heavenly Father's character to forgive, and we are His children so it should be in our character to forgive as well.]

[We must forgive and repeat because our Lord forgives and repeats. This **acrostic** for the word **"repeat"** will help you remember some of the essentials of forgiveness and taught in the Bible.]

1. **Recognize The Offense (Matt 5:23-24)** - [What is sin? Sin is a debt that is owed. Sin is a trespass (fall away). Sin is to miss the mark or fall short. Sin is iniquity or lawlessness. Sin is anything we do that offends God. It is because of our sins that we need God's forgiveness.]

[**What is and offense?** An offense is something someone has done that offends us or offends another person. When there is an offense, then forgiveness is required. Jesus said,]

*[Matthew 5:23-24 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and **there rememberest** that thy brother hath ought against thee; ²⁴Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.]*

[Our Lord is saying in these verses that if you come to worship God, and remember that there is an offense between you and another person, any other person, go get things right first and then come worship your Heavenly Father.]

[This teaches us that an unforgiving spirit will hinder your relationship with your Heavenly Father. Have you ever noticed that when you are in a conflict with another person that your difficulty will rob you of your peace of mind and your peace with God. People, all people, matter to God. Every person is extremely valuable to God, therefore they must be equally valuable to us.]

[God says if there is **ought** between you and another person, get that right so you can be right with your Heavenly Father.]

2. **Elevate The Offender (Matt 5:44)** [- This deals with placing the right value upon other people as just previously mentioned.]

*[Matthew 5:44 But I say unto you, **Love your enemies**, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;]*

[In 1960, Adolph Coors III, of the Coors Brewery, was kidnapped and held for ransom, and later killed. His son, Adolph Coors IV, then 15 years old, developed a hatred for the killer Joseph Corbett. In 1975, young Coors became a Christian and divested himself of his interest in the family brewery business. One day, he visited Corbett at the maximum security unit of Colorado's Canon City penitentiary. Corbett refused to see him. Undeterred, Coors left a Bible for him, inscribed with this message:]

["I'm sorry we could not meet. As a Christian, I am summoned by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, to forgive you. I do forgive you. I ask you to forgive me for the hatred I've held in my heart for you."]

[Later, Coors confessed that: "I have a love for that man that only Jesus Christ could have placed in my heart." -Don Maddox]

3. **Perceive Your Offenses (Matt 7.1-5)** - [Is there a beam in your eye?]

[Matthew 7:1-6 Judge not, that ye be not judged. ²For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. ³And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? ⁴Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? ⁵Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.]

[What might be a beam in your eye? - An unforgiving heart.]

[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.]

[We might wish to think that we haven't got a part in the differences with another party, but if there is a dispute then there is more than one person involved and there will be offenses on both sides. We must look for and perceive those things that are on our side of the dispute.]

4. **Elude the damage (Heb 12.14-15)** - [Elude the damage created by anger or vengeance. An unforgiving spirit will cause you great harm. It will hurt you spiritually and physically and will damage you more than the person you fail to forgive. We must be diligent to forgive.]

[Hebrews 12:14-15 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: ¹⁵ Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;]

[Fred Luskin, a psychologist from Stanford University says, "Holding on to hurts and nursing grudges wears you down physically and emotionally. Forgiving someone can be a powerful antidote."]

[Charlotte van Oyden Witvliet concurs. She is an assistant professor of Psychology at Hope College in Holland, Michigan who conducted a study with 71 volunteers that showed people who don't forgive experience "steep spikes in blood pressure, heart rate and muscle tension." Forgiveness, Witvliet found, helps people to remain calm. Forgiveness isn't about condoning what happened," Luskin said, "It is about breaking free from the person who wronged us."1[1]]

1[1] —Reader's Digest, March 2002, p. 173, Jim L. Wilson, *Fresh Illustrations*, (Austin, TX: WORDsearch, 2004), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "FORGIVENESS".

[Illustration - In 1982, **Stephen Watt** was a sheriff's officer with the misfortune of pulling **Mark Farnham** over in a routine traffic stop. What he didn't know is that Farnham was speeding for a reason—he'd just robbed a bank. Farnham shot Watt five times and left him for dead.]

[Watt recovered, but lost the sight in one eye, and still carries a bullet near his spine. As you might expect, Watt became bitter towards Farnham. His anger grew until his wife intervened. She encouraged him to forgive his assailant, if he was ever going to be a true Christian.]

[In 1986, Watt attended a revival service at the prison and spotted Farnham across the room. He walked over to Farnham and hugged him. Watt says, "I had basically been dead from the time I got shot until 1986." When he forgave Farnham, Watt says, "It was just like God picked up a semi-truck right off me and I actually started living." From all appearances, the forgiveness was complete; today the two men are best friends.]

In 2002, Republican Stephen Watt was a candidate in the Wyoming gubernatorial campaign and had promised that if elected, one of his first acts would be to release Farnham from jail.²[2]

5. **Abandon The Hurt (Acts 9.4-5)** - [Seek God's help, turn it all over to God. Who are they really attacking?]

[Acts 9:4-5 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? ⁵And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.]

6. **Transfer The Offence (Heb 10.16-17)** - [Send it away, move away from it.]

[Hebrews 10:16-17 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; ¹⁷And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.]

["Maturity is revealed by how you handle offenses and offenders."]

[Sam Boyd]

- B. **A Person That Must Be Realized (vs 14-15; Eph 4.32)** [- 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.** - We must forgive because we have been forgiven. We must forgive if we are to be forgiven.]

²[2] —<http://www.charismanews.com>, August 19, 2002, Submitted by Jim Sandell, Jim L. Wilson, *Fresh Illustrations*, (Austin, TX: WORDsearch, 2004), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "FORGIVENESS".

*[Ephes. 4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, **forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.**]*

[Have you been forgiven by your Heavenly Father? Did you deserve His forgiveness? Did your transgressions cost God dearly? If you have been forgiven, then you ought to love one another and ought to harbor a readiness and willingness to forgive within your heart. You ought to forgive at the same level that Jesus forgave you.]

[When you received the Lord Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, He came to dwell right inside of you. Now, the master of all forgiveness lives within you and He is compelling you to forgive and be forgiving. You will never have peace within you until you allow His character of forgiveness to Guide you. **Jesus is the person of forgiveness in you that is guiding you to be forgiving.**]

[So what does the Lord of all forgiveness teach us about being forgiving?]

1. **Jesus is a Comfort to every person (Matthew 11:28)** [- Those who are in the depths and despair of sin are asked to come. Jesus sees them in the midst of life's storms and says to them,]

*[Matthew 11:28 **Come unto me**, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.]*

[Jesus, in His forgiveness, is the Lighthouse of hope and the harbor of refuge for all of life's stormy turmoil. In the midst of their despair, our loving Lord reaches out to our world with compassion and forgiveness.]

[Let us learn to be like our Lord. Let us learn to be lighthouses of hope and harbors of refuge through the persuasion of forgiveness.]

2. **Jesus blood Cleanses every sin (Isaiah 1.18; 44:22; 1 John 1.6-7)** [- But our Lord does not just offer them a place of comfort and safety in the midst of the terrible storms generate by sin in ones life, our Lord also offers the incredible gift of total cleansing from all of one's sins. The Bible says,]

*[Isaiah 1:18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: **though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;** though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.]*

*[Isaiah 44:22 I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; **for I have redeemed thee.**]*

*[1 John 1:6-7 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: ⁷But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and **the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.**]*

[The Lord Jesus Christ offers to remove the vary sins that brought life's storms upon you in the first place. He will wash all of your sins away, relieving you of all of the penalty for your sins. He will cleanse you today, and wash all of your sins away, through the power of His precious cleansing blood.]

3. **Jesus is a Concealing for all time (1 John 1:9; Jeremiah 31:34, Psalm 103:12) [–**
When you come to the Lord Jesus Christ and confess your sins, God faithful forgives and cleanses you of that sin.]

[1 John 1:9⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.]

[What does it mean to confess our sins?]

[**Confess** - ὁμολογῶμεν (Gk) - from *homólogos* (n.f.), assenting, which is from *homou* (3674), together with, and *légo* (3004), to say. To assent, consent, admit, as used commonly in Class. Gr.; to promise, i.e., to agree with or consent to the desire of another.^{3[3]}]

[Hence to confess means to say the same thing as. It means that we must say the same thing as what God is saying about our sin. When we look at our sin the same way as God we will find it impossible to continue to live in our sin.]

[When we say the same thing as God about our sin we are confessing our sin and God responds with forgiveness to our sin.]

[When God forgives our sins, what does He do? The Bible says,]

*[Jeremiah 31:34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, **and I will remember their sin no more.**]*

*[Psalm 103:12 **As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.**]*

[God's forgiveness is absolute and complete, He remembers our sin no more. Our sins are gone.]

[Why is it important for us to know about the absolute cleansing that accompanies God's forgiveness? Because this knowledge give us comfort and hope. But it is even more important for us to understand God's forgiveness because to be like God is our ultimate

^{3[3]}Zodhiates, S. (2000, c1992, c1993). *The complete word study dictionary : New Testament* (electronic ed.) (G3670). Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

goal, and for us to learn to forgive like God ought to be our goal as well. Your goal should be to forget sin when you forgive sin; because this is what God does with sin.]

[Someone might say, “But I am a mere human being and I find that I cannot forgive and forget like God forgives.” Indeed, but do not use your human nature as an excuse to redefine forgiveness or only partially forgive. If you find it hard to forget then treat the sin as if it has been forgotten, never hold it to the offenders account again. Then decide that you will forgive as God does and strive to develop the forgiving character of God including His forgetfulness.]

[Our Lord Jesus Christ not only forgives our sins, but He is our example for forgiveness. Will you forgive as our Lord forgives? Praise God for the forgiveness we have received through our Lord Jesus Christ, now let us learn to follow His example.]

- C. **A Performance That Is Rewarded (vs 14-15; Matt 18.15-20)** [- *"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."* – Now, we know we ought to forgive and we ought to forgive repeatedly. We also see our Lord’s example in forgiveness. But what should we do in striving to forgive someone? Our Lord gave us specific instructions concerning forgiveness when He gave us what we call the Discipline of the Church. This passage reads,]

[Matthew 18:15-20 ¹⁵ Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. ¹⁶ But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. ¹⁷ And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. ¹⁸ Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.]

1. **Forgiveness Prevents Alienation (Matt 18.15)** [- *Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: **if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.*** – God does not like to see division within His body, within His Church, or within His family. If you have received the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, then you have become a part of the family of God and God wants His children to be right with each other.]
2. **Forgiveness Promotes Reconciliation (1 Pet 4.8; Rom 15.5-7).**

*1 Peter 4:8 And above all things **have fervent charity among yourselves:** for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.*

***Romans 15:5-7** Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: ⁶That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁷Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.*

[Illustration - A certain man had spoken in an uncomplimentary way of **Billy Graham**. In a conversation one night Billy said, "Deep down in my heart I was beginning to resent the man. Resentment is sin. I couldn't go on the platform with resentment in my heart. I couldn't ask those people to repent and love their neighbors if I had sin in my own heart. One afternoon, alone in my room, I told God that I was going to stay on my knees until He instilled a genuine love in my heart for the man. I stayed there, asking God to do what I could not do as a human. After considerable time, God answered my prayer, and when I stood to my feet, I had a genuine love for him. Only God can turn resentment into love." - Mrs. Paul Evans]

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