

One Another – Forgive

Text : Eph. 4: 31-32 , Matt. 18: 21-35

INTRODUCTION :

- A. As we have been pursuing a study in reciprocal Christianity, we have observed a great host of material on the subject. (*One Another passages*)
1. The holy scriptures instruct us about conducting relationships on four levels.
 - a. Man's relationship with God.
 - b. Men's relationships with other people.
 - c. People's relationship within their earthly family.
 - d. The Christian's relationships within the family of God.
 2. The holy scriptures present Christianity as a social, *i.e.*, as a communal lifestyle.
 - a. One cannot maintain a relationship with God separate and apart from God's family.
 - b. A foolish wife once told her husband, "*I married you not your whole family.*"
 - c. When one is adopted into the family of God, he becomes part of the whole family.
 3. Each member of a family has responsibilities to every other member of the family.
 - a. Loving one's family is as natural as breathing.
 - b. Each member cares for every other member and puts up with them all.
 - c. Quarrels happen and offenses are committed in every family, but love overrides the offenses so they're dealt with in stride.
- B. Love is the glue that holds all personal relationships together.
1. Likewise, love is the glue that holds God's family together. (*the church*)
 2. For this reason love is the most often repeated command in the N.T.
 3. All of the other reciprocal commands presuppose love. (*one another commands*)
 4. Absent love, none of the "**One Another**" commands will be consistently obeyed.
 - a. Who will consistently "**serve**" someone they do not love.
(*Absent love, why would your wife even put up with you, let alone serve you.*)
 - b. Absent love, would you "**forbear**" the foolishness of the spiritually immature.
 - c. If you didn't love a brother, would you consistently "**prefer**" him over others ?
- C. The second most often emphasized reciprocal command in the N.T. is for Christians to be forgiving of each other.

Thus, with this study we'll look at a portion of what the scriptures teach about the necessity for Christians to be forgiving people.

I. Why is it important that Christians be forgiving of others.

A. It's important to be forgiving because God commands us to forgive others.

1. **Col. 3: 12-13** So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; **13** bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.
2. **Eph. 4: 32** – Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.
3. Lenski's comment on this verse summed it up well : (Page 588)
 “Let us put this plainly since even elders misunderstand it. The moment a man wrongs me I must forgive him. Then my soul is free. If I hold the wrong against him, then I sin against God and against him and jeopardize my forgiveness with God. Whether he repents, makes amends, asks my pardon or not, makes no difference, I have instantly forgiven him. He must face God with the wrong he has done; but that is his affair and God's and not mine save that in the case he is a brother I should help him according to Matt. 18: 15, etc. But whether this succeeds or not and before this even begins I must forgive him.”

B. It's important to be forgiving because love demands forgiveness.

1. **I Cor. 13: 4-7** And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.
4 Love is patient, love is kind *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant, **5** does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,
6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;
7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
2. Love is the identifying mark of the Christian. **John 13: 34-35**

C. The eternal destiny of our souls depends upon our willingness to forgive others.

1. While preaching the “*Sermon On The Mount*” Jesus gave “The Lord's Prayer.”
Matt. 6: 12 – And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
14 – For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. (**Luk 11:4** - For we ourselves also forgive everyone)
2. When teaching His disciple to pray with faith Jesus said :
Mark 11: 25-26 “Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in Heaven will also forgive you your transgressions.
26 [“But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in Heaven forgive your transgressions.”]
3. **Clearly** ... If we ourselves do not forgive others, God will not forgive us.

D. We Christians must forgive others because God has forgiven us. (*Moral imperative*)

1. **Matt. 18: 21-35** ... Remember our text
2. Peter asked how many time one had to forgive another.
 - a. When he postulated “**seven times**” he thought he was being generous.
 - b. The rabbis taught one must forgive three times.
 - c. Jesus said there is no limit to forgiveness. ($70 \times 7 = \text{infinity}$, not just 490)
3. **We will (can) never be called upon to forgive others more than God has forgiven us. (*We sin daily ... God forgives daily*)**

III. Some things that forgiveness is not.**A. Forgiveness is not rationalizing the event.**

1. “Well, maybe I was too sensitive and over reacted.”
2. “She didn’t mean anything by it, that’s just the ways she is.”
3. When the offender asks forgiveness, don’t respond, “That’s okay. It was nothing.”
- * 4. When responding to an apology :
 - a. Don’t excuse the offense.
 - b. Acknowledge their desire for forgiveness and give it.
 - c. If you had a valid reason to be offended, don’t apologize for being offended.

B. Forgiveness is not forgetting an offense happened.

1. There is no “*delete key*” in your brain.
2. Some offenses are so hurtful they will never be forgotten.
3. Don’t beat yourself up because you still remember a wrong that you experienced.
 - a. God knows all. **He** never forgets that a sin was committed, but He forgives it.
 - b. When forgiveness has occurred, the offense is taken out of future considerations.

C. Forgiveness is not an instant restoration of trust.

1. Even after forgiveness is granted, there are consequences to sin.
2. For Example :
 - a. You may forgive someone who abused your child, **but** you would never entrust your child to them again.
 - b. An employee who steals will not be allowed to handle the money.

*** Trust is a fragile thing which it takes time to establish.
It is easily broken and much more difficult to restore.**

D. Forgiveness doesn't eliminate the consequences of the transgression.

1. Some death-row inmates are forgiven by God and by their victims, but they still die.
2. Boys get caught vandalizing may be forgiven, but they must still make restitution.
3. **Forgiveness without consequences can facilitate bad behavior, e.g. , drugs.**

III. What does forgiveness entail ?**A. The verb translated as “forgive” in our Ephesians text is “*charizomai*” :**

1. Vine defines it as : “to bestow a favor unconditionally”
2. Strong defines it as : “to give graciously, to give freely, to bestow”
3. As the Christian receives grace, he is expected to give grace.

B. In order to forgive one must :

1. Recognize that everyone is imperfect and all sometimes need forgiveness.
Eccl. 7: 20 – Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins.
 - a. As good as you are, you will need forgiveness at some point/s in your life.
 - * b. Don't have unrealistic expectations of your brethren.
2. Love others in spite of their faults.
 - a. You expect them to love you in spite of your faults. (*If not, love is impossible.*)
 - b. If we can love our enemies, surely we can love defective brethren. **Luke 6:27-29**
3. Learn to respond to evil with good. (*Force yourself until it is a conditioned response.*)
 - a. **Rom. 12: 21– Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**
 - b. The Apostle Paul responded to the Philippian jailor with good. **Acts 16: 22f**

C. Forgiving others requires faith.

1. True forgiveness comes from the heart. (*A way of thinking*)
Matt. 18: 34-35 And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. **35** My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.
2. In order to forgive from the heart, one must trust God to be his avenger.
 - a. **Rom. 12: 18-21** If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. **19** Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. **20** “But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if

he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

D. Forgiving others requires the surrender of one’s pride.

1. When one has been wronged, his pride is wounded.
 - a. Hurt feelings are more difficult to heal than physical wounds.
 - b. Empty words don’t sooth them; in fact, they can sometime inflame them.
2. The offended party must make the effort to bring his feeling under subjection.
 - a. LOVE .. **does not take into account a wrong suffered, .. bears all things .. endures all**
 - b. Even when offended, the Christian owes the debt of love to the offender. **Rom. 13:8**

E. Forgiving requires the turning loose of feelings of animosity and vengefulness.

1. When a person is wronged, by nature his body cries out for justice; it instinctive.
2. Thus, the Christian must win the victory over his flesh; **he must act, not react.**
3. When offended he must entrust justice to God and surrender his desire for vengeance.
 - a. Once something is truly forgiven it can never be brought up again.
 - b. Once forgiven an offense can’t be allowed to shape one’s opinion of the transgressor.
 - c. That which has been forgiven can’t be allowed to affect how one treats the offender
4. True forgiveness **“from the heart”** is very difficult to actually practice.

*** Forgiveness is much easier said than done. C.S. Louis wrote, “Everyone thinks forgiveness is a lovely idea until they have something to forgive.”**

IV. The consequences of not forgiving.

A. Most importantly, the one who doesn’t forgive won’t be forgiven – thus be **LOST.**

B. When there’s no forgiveness, bitterness and resentment destroy relationships.

1. Our text explains how bitterness and other divisive attitude at to be dealt with.
 - a. **Eph. 4: 31-32 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.**
 - b. Verse 31 is accomplished by means of verse 32.
2. One can’t eliminate the negative feelings until after the offense is forgiven.

C. Withholding forgiveness destroys the one who's wronged more than offender.

1. Unforgiveness is like acid that eats away at the holiness of the one who carries it.
2. An unforgiving spirit is a cancer that eats away at the good qualities in its host.

D. The failure to forgive will lead to divisions and clicks within a congregation.

1. Often brethren are polite and cordial on the surface, but resentful at heart.
* *Most rapidly growing congregation in the area died because of unforgiveness.*
2. Without forgiveness NO family can continue on, not even God's family.

CONCLUSION :

A. It is true in all families. From time to time offense will come.

1. While going down the road of life, our fellowship often experiences dented finders.
2. Occasionally, there may even be a significant wreck.
3. **ONLY** loving forgiveness prevents the wrecks from becoming fatal to the fellowship.

B. When forgiveness from the heart is practiced, love is strengthened.

1. The unity of the body grows.
2. Brethren work together in harmony.
3. I read, "Forgiveness is the grease that keeps the wheels of the church moving."

C. Surely we who have been forgiven so much cannot not withhold it from others.

INVITATION :

A. If you have not yet been forgiven by God, why do you delay ?

B. God is eager to forgive you, if you will be come to Him :

C. He sent Jesus, His Only Begotten Son, to receive you.

1. Confess your faith in Him.
2. Turn away from your life of sin and ask His forgiveness.
3. Commit yourself to follow Him by burying your old man of sin in baptism.

D. He will forgive you, give you a new life and restore you to fellowship with Him.

Lesson Texts :**Eph. 4: 32**

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. **32** Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Matthew 18: 21-35

21 Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” **22** Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

23 For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. **24** When he had begun to settle *them*, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. **25** But since he did not have *the means* to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. **26** So the slave fell *to the ground* and prostrated himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.’ **27** And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. **28** But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and *began* to choke *him*, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ **29** So his fellow slave fell *to the ground* and *began* to plead with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you.’ **30** But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. **31** So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. **32** Then summoning him, his lord said to him, ‘You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. **33** ‘Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?’ **34** And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. **35** My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.”

Eph. 4: 32

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.