

The Hardest Person To Forgive

Text : **John 4: 7-19, 39-42**

INTRODUCTION :

A. When is it the hardest for you to forgive someone ?

1. As Christians we know that our salvation depends upon our forgiving others.
 - a. **Matt. 6: 14-15** For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. **15** But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.
 - b. For many forgiving others is the most difficult aspect of Christianity.
2. While a person is hurting because of a wrong incurred, it's hard to forgive it.
 - a. While others are assailing you as a result of a lie, it's hard to forgive the liar.
 - b. However, as the mental anguish subsides, it becomes easier to forgive.
3. Wounded pride makes it very difficult to forgive.

B. What is the hardest thing for you to forgive ?

1. We all forgive many things every day.
 - a. Forgiveness is such a part of the Christian character that we do it without notice.
 - b. People say things that we don't like or that we think is wrong, but we let it slide.
 - * c. **Road rage is the absence of a forgiving spirit.** (Give examples of offenses.)
2. When people intentionally do malicious things to hurt you it's harder to forgive.
 - a. Some people spread malicious rumors to hurt others. (Cause by envy, malice, hatred)
 - b. When some people feel hurt or are angry they feel justified in hurting others.
 - c. When their hurt or anger passes, they expect others to forget all their offenses.
3. The hardest things for me to forgive are offenses against those whom I love.
 - a. **ILL. - As a young man I was mentored by an elder with whom I became very close. There was a deacon in the congregation who was very jealous of that elder and spoke evil of him at every opportunity. On several occasions that deacon started very malicious, false rumors about the elder. It enraged me more than it did the victim of the rumors. I became was so very resentful against the one who was seeking to hurt my mentor and against the other elders who did not come to his defense, that it caused my mentor to justly rebuke me.**
 - b. If you want to experience my ire just attack one of my children or my wife.
 - c. By nature, we instinctively protect the ones we love so it's hard to forgive.

C. Who is the hardest person for you to forgive ?

1. The most difficult command in the bible is :
Luke 6: 28- Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. (KJV)
 - a. When someone deliberately tries to hurt you, it's hard to forgive them.
 - b. The natural instinct is to repay malice with malice, but Christians must forgive.
2. The more we love someone, the harder it is to forgive them for some things.
 - a. Those we love the most have the ability to hurt us the most.
They have a clear unobstructed shot at our heart.
 - b. We don't defend ourselves against those we love. (*guard is down*)
 - c. We expect those we love to seek our highest good, never to do evil to us.
3. Many marriages end because one spouse feels betrayed and cannot forgive the other.

TRANSITION :

Regardless of the where, the when or the what, there is one who is most often harder to forgive than any other and that is one's self. Guilt is the failure to forgive one's self. With this lesson we will look at how the Christian should deal with guilt.

I. Guilt is something with which everyone has to deal.**A. The Samaritan woman at the well hid from her guilt.**

1. Came to the well at a time when other women would not be there.
 - a. Americans miss the significance of this because we just turn on the tap for water.
 - b. The fetching of water was an essential chore, but also a social event.
2. Guilt is the most logical reason for her avoiding contact with other women.
 - a. Five men had rejected her.
 - b. Vs. 39 Her own words indicate she was at fault.
"He told me all things I have done." (*Not, all I have suffered.*)

B. Shame is the result of guilt that's been internalized.

1. It's not associated with the transgression, but with the transgressor. (the person)
2. Shame is the way we feel about ourselves as a result of having transgressed.
3. Associating ourselves with what we did makes us feel bad about who we are.

C. Carrying guilt in our lives has consequences.

1. Psychologists identify guilt as the root problem of many of their patients.
2. Guilt destroys our confidence.

**Prov. 28: 1- The wicked flee when no one is pursuing,
But the righteous are bold as a lion.**

3. Guilt adversely affects relationships.
 - a. Fear of being found out smothers openness.
 - b. The fear of being confronted with the sin is ever present.

D. We all have to deal with guilt or it will overwhelm us.

1. A friend tells a story about his favorite aunt. When he was a child, she moved out of state and they went to visit her. The adults sent him to the back yard to play. As he passed through the kitchen door a kitten ran to get out so he instinctively slammed the door to prevent its escape. However, he was not quite fast enough and broke the cat's neck. In a panic he buried the kitten in the flower bed out back. For years he thought about it every time he saw her until he finally had to confess. To his surprise, he learned that his aunt had never owned a cat. The aunt said, "When I found that kitten buried in my flower bed, I was angry at the previous owners for having buried it there." (cf-"Tale Tell Heart")
There's likely no one here who doesn't have a kitten or two buried somewhere.
2. Jesus told the woman at the well all that she had done. (*He knew & He knows.*)
 - a. He did not condemn her, but offered her living water.
 - b. He offered forgiveness, **relationship, peace of mind.**
 - c. **Jesus knows where we buried the kittens and He loves us anyway.**
God's grace is the solution to man's guilt.

Read ... Psa. 103: 1-14 (Satan is the accuser, not God.)

II. There are reasons why we have more difficulty forgiving ourselves.**A. We cannot accept personal failures.**

1. We know that we could have done better, but didn't. (*Disappoint w/ ourselves*)
2. Disappointment in ourselves causes us to replay it over and over in our minds.
 - a. *"I know I'm more moral than that, why did I ..."* (**We live with our thoughts.**)
 - b. *"I know I should have had a better handle on my temper than to ..."*

B. We can excuse others, but not ourselves.

1. We know what was in our hearts at the time. (*We give others the benefit of doubt.*)
2. We don't view ourselves as being worthy of forgiveness.

3. Part of our American thinking is : **If you do the crime, you do the time.**
 - a. There are some things we can't feel we've atoned for, that we've done our time.
 - b. We set the level of forgiveness where others can reach it, but not ourselves. (**If you do this we'll be square.** ... *Apologize, Repay, etc*)
4. We come to the point we don't view ourselves as being worthy of forgiveness.
 - a. Others can be worthy, but not us.
 - b. We hear our thoughts and know our motives, but not theirs.
 - c. It's easier for us to love them than it is to love ourselves.

C. Christians must learn to stop resisting the grace of God.

1. To resist His grace is for us to put ourselves above Him, to resist His sovereignty.
2. **Rom. 8: 1** ... There is **no** condemnation in Christ. ***His desire is to forgive.***
 - a. We have no right to forbid what God has granted. (**God wants to lift our burden.**)
 - b. He's given us a freedom in Christ which should result in a peace which **"surpasses all comprehension."** **Phil. 4:7**
3. In his book, "Forgiveness", Paul Myers accurately wrote : *"Unforgiveness that is self-directed will do more damage than any other form of unforgiveness."*
 - a. It keeps one from feeling he can't do things for God.
 - b. The insecurity of past failures prevents present successes.
 - c. Guilt effectively blocks spiritual maturity if not dealt with.

III. Feelings of guilt can be a good thing.

A. Guilt protects us.

1. It alerts us when we're straying from the path we know to be right.
2. Guilt functions as a moral guardrail. (**When we bump it we know to turn back.**)
3. The prophet David wrestled with guilt and it put him back on the right road.
 - a. **Read ... Psa. 38: 1-8**
 - b. Secret sin can't be hidden in a peaceful heart.

B. Our relationship with God is going to be adversely affected if guilt is present.

1. God uses His word to counsel us to reject secret sins **and** return to Him.
2. Too often we collect our past sins (*guilt*) like old items piled in the attic or a closet.
 - a. God wants to clean out the clutter we've tucked away in our hearts.
 - b. **I John 1: 9- If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

C. Guilt left unresolved is very unhealthy

1. The longer we live with guilt the less we feel it.
2. Eventually we don't feel it at all.
 - a. **I Tim. 4:2-** ... **seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron,**
 - b. Imagine the damage one would do to his physical body if he felt no pain.
3. The most dangerous criminal of all is a psychopath because he feels no guilt.

IV. How do I put myself in a position to enjoy the peace that comes from forgiveness.**A. Learn to distinguish between “Godly Sorrow” and guilt.**

1. Many live in the self-imposed prison of guilt. (*Guilt leads to motional torment.*)
2. Godly sorry leads to repentance which leads to forgiveness which leads to freedom.

B. We must realize the source of our internal conflict.

1. **Zech. 3:1-** Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.
2. We must identify the source of those voices in our head.
 - a. That accusing voice in our head comes from Satan. (**prosecutor**)
(O.T. : “**Satan**” = *adversary*, N.T. : “**devil**” = *accuser*)
 - b. Jesus is our defense attorney ... **I John 2: 1-2**

C. We must view guilt as pain.

1. Get rid of it.
2. Find the cause and address it. (**Be pro-active.**)
3. Seek out the cure and use it. (**Take care of it. Go to them ...**)

D. Apply the scriptures to ourselves. (**Psa. 38, 103, Rom. 8, etc.)**

1. When God forgives us, we must also forgive ourselves.
2. God is greater than the guilt we bear.
 - a. **I John 3: 19-20** We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him **20** in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things.
 - b. God knows all your transgressions and He forgives them all in Christ.
3. No matter what you do you're never going to deserve forgiveness.
Eph. 2: 8-9 ... Forgiveness is a gift received by grace through faith. (*accept or reject*)

CONCLUSION :

A. Are you willing to accept the forgiveness that God is offering ?

1. Are you willing to place all your faith and trust in His Only Begotten Son ?
2. Are you willing to turn away from a life of self-gratification and seek Him ?
3. Will you allow His blood to wash your conscience clean ?
 - a. **Heb. 9:14**
 - b. **Titus 3:5**
 - c. **I Pet. 3:21**

B. When by faith you arise from the watery grave as a new creature, you :

1. Can walk away rejoicing as did the treasurer of Ethiopia. ... **Acts 8: 39**
2. You can live at peace with God and with yourself. ... **Phil. 4:7**
3. You can live guilt free because Jesus will keep you forgiven. ... **Rom. 8: 1**

INVITATION :

- A. Your pardon has been purchased
- B. You are invited to accept it.
- C. The choice is yours.