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August 2, 2020 / June 12, 2005

Admonition, Forgiveness & Peace Selected Scriptures

Introduction

The subject of forgiveness came up several times as I was preaching through the gospels in the Life of Christ sermon series, but it has been about 15 years since I last specifically dealt with it as a topical sermon. I find that there is normally confusion on the Biblical nature of admonition, confrontation, forgiveness, reconciliation and peace. This is largely due to either ignorance to one degree or another of what the Bible actually says, or it is from hearing sermons that focus on a few particular passages, often out of context, so that certain ideas dominate without the proper balance of the rest of the Scriptures. My quest this morning is to restore a proper balance to these subjects by examining them more comprehensively and especially in the context of the fellowship that is supposed to exist in the church and the shepherding role that belongs to the church leaders.

Danger Ahead

One of the first things each person must realize and properly respond to is that life is full of spiritual danger, and even more so if we are not walking properly with our Lord. That is why last Sunday's sermon was on that topic. Paul gives strong warnings and commands to be prepared for it in Ephesians 6. We are in a spiritual battle and must learn to stand firm against the schemes of the devil by putting on the full armor of God. . Though Satan often uses people to carry out his schemes, the battle is not against flesh and blood, but rather with what is behind it which are the rulers, powers, world forces of darkness and spiritual wickedness. You must put on the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the helmet of salvation and take up the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. If any of these are missing, then you are a vulnerable target for the devil's lies, deceit, unrighteousness, discord, unbelief, doubt and empty philosophies.

All of us who have walked with the Lord any length of time are aware that these dangers come through our own sinful desires, the enticements of the world, and the temptations of our adversary. Like Paul in Romans 7, we know the struggle with our flesh and its desires as well as those of our eyes and our pride (1 John 2:16). We know the struggle to resist the pressure of the world to conform us into its image (Romans 12:2), and that our adversary, the devil, goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).

Because of these dangers, humble believers, wise Christians, will seek out other believers who can help them in their walk with Christ. They heed the many admonitions in Scripture to "*Listen to counsel and accept discipline, That you may be wise the rest of your days*" (Prov. 19:20). They resist the temptation to go it alone or based just on their own thoughts, opinions and emotions for they know that "*the way of a fool is right in his own eyes*" (Prov. 12:15). Within the body of Christ, the church, Christians work together so that the whole body will mature. Believers patiently help those who are weak while encouraging the fainthearted and admonishing the unruly (1 Thess 5).

It is that last part that many will resist. We all like patience, help and encouragement, but most people do not like to be told they are wrong. The wise respond to rebuke with love for the one that corrected them while the proud respond with hate (Prov. 9:8). The wise know that those that heed instruction and give serious regard to correction will benefit, grow and eventually attain honor (Prov. 13:18). The proud fool despises wisdom and instruction (Prov. 1:7), and instead goes his own way reaping trouble for himself and causing harm to others (Prov. 1:32; 10:1,8,14,21; 13:20; 14:1; etc).

Because such people are so resistive to admonition and react so badly to it, most people will not rebuke them. That is why I refer to the Scriptural command to “*admonish one another*” (Romans 15:14; Colossians 1:28; 3:16; 1 Thess. 5:14) as the “difficult one another.” It is something that should be part of common life among Christians, but more often than not, it is left for the leaders to do.

But that brings up another danger. Church leaders have a responsibility to correct those who sin so that they might walk in righteousness, and they also have a responsibility to protect the rest of the flock from those that show themselves to be dangerous. Warnings of this danger are also seen throughout the New Testament. In Acts 20:28-30 Paul warned the Ephesian Elders “*Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*”²⁹ “*I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;*”³⁰ “*and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.*” 2 Peter 2:1-3 warns about false prophets and false teachers that will secretly introduce destructive heresies that would cause the way of truth to be maligned and would exploit others. 1 John 2:18-19 warns about “antichrists” that went out from them because they were not really of them.

While wolves, false teachers and antichrists are the extremes, they are real and present dangers to the church. They are not hard to find on so called “Christian” TV and radio (there are good teachers out there, but there are also heretics), and we had to deal with wolves that arose from our own elders in the past. But there are also others that may not quite get those titles, but they are a danger none the less, and shepherds must protect the flock from them. In Titus 3:9-11 Paul instructed Titus to “*shun foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law; for they are unprofitable and worthless.*”¹⁰ “*Reject a factious man after a first and second warning,*”¹¹ “*knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.*” Paul warned in Romans 16:17-18, “*Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.*”¹⁸ “*For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.*” These men are to be “*marked*” (KJV & YLT) or “*noted*” (NKJV).

These are important instructions to consider and heed, and even more so in our society in which not just tolerance, but acceptance and celebration of the sin of others has become the supreme virtue. Discernment is thrown out and such dangerous people are welcomed instead of rebuked, warned against and avoided. How well our age fits Paul’s warning in 2 Tim. 4:3-4 that “*the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but [wanting] to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires;*”⁴ “*and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths*”

In our own time, it seems like it is not the wolves, false teachers, antichrists or the factious that are rebuked and admonished, but rather the shepherds who are doing the warning. ■ Church leaders are the ones criticized and denounced for being “insensitive,” “intolerant,” “unloving,” “legalistic,” and “unforgiving.” That has happened here at various times, but Jesus warned that the godly would be falsely accused and slandered (Matthew 5:10-12). Insensitive? Perhaps. I am sure there are always more tactful ways to say things, but I find my real insensitivity is not more quickly perceiving the danger certain people turn out to be. Intolerant? No, I find that am often too tolerant and do not raise the shepherd’s crook sooner to protect the sheep. Unloving? Only in the sense that rebukes do not come faster and with more strength, for stated in both Hebrews 12:6 and Proverbs 13:24, chastening is a sign of love, not hate. Legalistic? No. Salvation comes by God’s grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and not by works of righteousness. That accusation comes from the licentious who reject Biblical standards for righteous living. Unforgiving? Not at all, but there seems to be a lot of confusion about the nature of forgiveness and its results. For that reason I want to spend the rest of this morning talking with you about forgiveness, reconciliation and peace.

Forgiveness

It's Need

We need to learn to forgive one another because conflicts are inevitable in this life, and without forgiveness those conflicts will hinder, damage and destroy the loving relationships we are to have with one another. Conflicts can happen when even simple differences of opinion and purpose cause frustration, hindrance or even blockage of the goals or desires of others. Paul and Barnabas got into a conflict that split their missions team over a difference of opinion about taking John Mark with them (Acts 15:38-39). Add sin to this mix and conflicts can become explosive. James 4:1-3 tells us that the root of quarreling and conflict is our selfishness and envy. The Corinthian church was even fractured over how people were using their spiritual gifts. Conflicts often arise from simple misunderstandings. How many of us have had an argument with someone only to find out we actually both agreed, but had misunderstood what the other person was trying to say.

It's Attitude

Forgiveness arises from love. A love for God, and a love for other people. Only love seeks the good of the other person and values the relationship because of that. Without love, relationships are only something to be manipulated in order to achieve your own selfish desires. There is no basis of true forgiveness in that.

Because of the Christian's love for God, they seek out a relationship with Him and desire to remove any obstacle to that relationship. Since God is always right, any conflict with Him requires us to confess our sins to Him and thereby receive His forgiveness and cleansing (1 John 1:9). Forgiveness "*signifies the remission of the punishment due to sinful conduct*" (Vines), and God grants forgiveness because of His love for us, a love proven when God Himself paid the price needed to satisfy His justice so that we could be forgiven and adopted as His sons. That is why Jesus, God the Son, became a man, lived a sinless life, then willingly died on the cross as a substitute payment for our sin. His resurrection from the dead proved the acceptance of the sacrifice and the truth of His promises to forgive those who believe in Him. You can be forgiven in and through Christ.

When it comes to people, there is plenty of sin for all parties involved, and for that reason, forgiveness also requires humility. Jesus addressed this in Matthew 7:3-5 when He commanded us to take the log out of our own eye before we tried to take the speck out of our brother's eye. Paul expands on this in Galatians 6:1-5 saying that in seeking to restore an erring brother there is to be a spirit of gentleness while also looking to yourself lest you also be tempted. That humility allows for more give and take between humans in the quest to find a resolution to the conflict that will glorify our Lord. Christians are to walk in humility (Philippians 2; 1 Peter 5:5) and be willing to forgive (Luke 17:3-4).

It's Goals

The goal of love, and the forgiveness that arises out of it, is not just the end of the conflict, but also the reconciliation of the relationships damaged by the conflict. The quest is for true peace and unity, not just the end of current hostilities. Peace is one of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), and we are to pursue peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart (2 Timothy 2:22). Believers are to be of one mind and live in peace (2 Cor. 13:11).

Paul explains in Philippians 2:3-4 another reason humility is required of Christians. We are to have the same attitude of humility that existed in Christ Jesus who set aside the glories of Heaven in order to become a man and redeem us at Calvary. If Jesus did that, then we can certainly follow His example and "*Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not [merely] look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.*" It is this humility of mind resulting in caring for others more than self that allows believers to live in peace and harmony. Without this humility, any forgiveness offered or

received will only be the peace of a truce and not the peace of reconciliation and unity. It should be emphasized that God wants Christians to be reconciled to one another (Matthew 5:24), and live in unity and peace (Ephesians 4:3; Colossians 3:14).

It's Offering

One of the great fallacies often taught is that the Christian is to forgive unconditionally and unilaterally. This is the idea that the one offended in a conflict is to forgive the offender without requiring anything from him and that this can be done even without the offender's participation. This idea takes root because it is partly true in the sense that all Christians are commanded in numerous Scriptures to forgive, and there can be an unconditional and unilateral aspect to forgiveness in certain respects and situations. However, forgiveness is also of necessity conditional and bilateral in other respects and situations.

On the unilateral side, Christians are to individually be willing to forgive. Jesus' answer to Peter's question about how many times he should forgive someone was "*seventy times seventy*" (Matthew 18:21-35). If we are unwilling to forgive others, then our Heavenly Father will not forgive us (Matthew 6:15; 18:35). Those who are merciful receive mercy (Matthew 5:7), but those who are not merciful will not receive it themselves (James 2:13). Are you willing to forgive?

Also on the unilateral side, an individual can choose to overlook an offense. Proverbs 19:11 states, "*A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, And it is his glory to overlook a transgression.*" Sometimes that is done to avoid something worse happening as Proverbs 17:14 warns, "*The beginning of strife is [like] letting out water, So abandon the quarrel before it breaks out.*" Hopefully, for the Christian at least, it is because it is the application of love to the situation. 1 Peter 4:8 tells us, "*Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.*" 1 Corinthians 13:5 describes this aspect of love as "*not taking into account a wrong suffered*" (NASB). This is how we deal with people with all the minor irritations of daily life. This is easier for those who are less sensitive to personal offences. Those who are sensitive to such offenses work harder at it for they must consciously set aside the transgression.

As the nature of the offense increases, the ability to unilaterally handle it decreases, and the necessity for the offender to be involved in the forgiveness increases. If the conflict is causing your relationship to be strained and it is uncomfortable to be around the person, then you probably need to talk with them and try to work things out. Just discussing it may quickly resolve any issues or misunderstandings. It is also possible that though your relationship is strained, you recognized that it is actually of such a minor nature that you choose to unilaterally overlook the offense without any action on the part of the offender.

However, you may find that it is of a more serious nature in which there is a breakage of some kind in the relationship. From this point on, forgiveness is no longer unilateral. It will take work on the part of both parties to repair the relationship. Ideally, the matters are resolved so that the needed apologies, forgiveness and reconciliation take place between both parties. However, though the Christian is to be willing to forgive, unless that forgiveness is accepted, the relationship remains broken with its subsequent consequences.

Back in the last millennium before I was a pastor, I loaned some money to a co-worker that was ill. Her illness continued and so her financial condition got even worse. I finally told her to forget about it and that I forgave the debt, but she continued to insist she had to pay it back. However, her guilt over not being able to do so caused her to start avoiding me, then later shunning me. I forgave her the debt, but she would not accept it resulting in a destruction of the relationship solely on her own part. A broken relationship requires forgiveness to be a transaction between both parties. If the offender refuses the forgiveness offered by the offended, there is no reconciliation.

Tragically, some issues and disagreements may only be able to resolved to the point of a mutually agreeable settlement of the differences through an exchange of promises. That is what occurred with Jacob and Laban in Genesis 31 and the setting up of a pillar as a reminder to them both not pass it to cause harm to the other one. They gained the peace of a truce that removed the quest for revenge, but there was no true reconciliation. At the end of Acts 15 we find that the only agreement Paul and Barnabas could end up with over Barnabas' cousin, Mark, was to go their separate ways, but later we find that there had to have been a reconciliation, for Paul asks for Mark to be brought to him because he was of useful service (2 Timothy 4:11).

It's Requirements

As the conflict moves into the areas of sin against you (Matthew 18:15) or another (1 Corinthians 5:1-8), or you catch the person in a trespass (Galatians 6:1), which could include any sin, then confrontation becomes necessary. It can no longer be just overlooked. There are steps to this confrontation. Ideally this should be personal (Matthew 18:15), but Paul had to do this by letter in 1 Corinthians 5. If there is no resolution, then it escalates and others are also brought in to establish the facts (Matthew 18:16), and since the goal here is to "*win the brother,*" it is bringing others who will help resolve the issues and bring about reconciliation. There is a mediatorial aspect to what they should be doing. Paul asked Clement and an unnamed companion in Philippi to help Euodia and Syntyche to resolve their conflict (Philippians 4:2-3). Galatians 6:1 uses the plural pronoun to describe who should be involved in restoring someone caught in a trespass. This should not be a couple of your buddies coming along to back you up in your confrontation. Here at Grace Bible Church we ask that one or more of our church leaders be involved at this step and require that if it moves to the next step, which is telling the church so that even more people can be involved in trying to bring about a resolution and reconciliation (Mt. 18:17). If the person refuses to listen to the church, then they are to be as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer. They are no longer treated as fellow Christians. That is the final step of what is commonly known as church discipline, but church discipline starts with a simple confrontation over a conflict of some type. It only precedes to the next step when there no resolution. It is done out of love for the one in sin in the same way that it is out of love that we discipline our children.

There are those that advocate that even at this level that forgiveness is to be unconditional. That is simply not true. While we are to be willing to forgive, there are conditions that must be met for it to be offered and accepted. Jesus said in Luke 17:3-4 "*Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. ⁴ "And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him."*

Repentance is not a popular topic in modern American Christianity, but it is still a Biblical one. Repentance, μετανοέω / metanoëô, is a change in one's mind or purpose with the mind referring to the seat of moral reflection. A change in mind that does not result in a change in action is not really a change of mind. In the New Testament the word is always used as a change for the better in reference from sin. Repentance is a recognition of and turning away from sin.

Some have cited Ephesians 4:32 as proof that forgiveness is to be unconditional, "*And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.*" Well, let's consider how God in Christ has forgiven you? Was it unilateral and unconditional? Certainly it was unilateral from the stand point of its offer, for no man will seek God at all with the intervention of the Holy Spirit (Romans 3:11-12). It is also unconditional in the sense that the cost required for it to be offered has been paid by Jesus Himself on the cross. It was Jesus' blood poured out that paid the price needed for the forgiveness of sin (Matthew 26:28; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14). We cannot earn God's forgiveness in any manner. Not through works, not through penance, not through restitution.

However, forgiveness is certainly not unilateral or unconditional in its application, otherwise all people are forgiven and Hell will be empty except for the devil and his demons. But 2 Thessalonians

1:8-9 states that the Lord will “*deal out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.*” Or as Hebrews 2:3 rhetorically asks, “*how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?*” The offer of forgiveness of sins is universal, but receiving forgiveness of sins is not. They are two different things. In addition, we find that there are conditions on receiving forgiveness from God. Salvation is conditional, not universal.

In Luke 24:46,47 Jesus said, “*Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.*” Repentance, as we saw earlier, is a condition of forgiveness. There must be a change of mind in regards to sin, self and the Savior. There also should be fruit in keeping with that repentance (Matthew 3:8; Acts 2:38).

In Acts 10:43 Peter proclaims of Jesus that “*all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.*” God’s forgiveness demands a belief in the truth about person and work of Jesus Christ. This includes His deity, humanity, sinlessness, substitutionary sacrifice and resurrection.

1 John 1:9 states, “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” This verse also applies to Christians. We must agree with God that He is right and we are wrong. That is confession.

When conflict causes a breakage in a relationship, then that relationship cannot be reconciled without proper forgiveness, and that forgiveness requires both parties to come to agreement. Sin and selfishness may preclude that from happening, but we are to strive to be at peace with all men so far as it depends on us (Romans 12:8).

It should also be pointed out that forgiveness is to be sought in every direction. By that I mean that both parties in a conflict are responsible before God to seek reconciliation. The one who is offended should seek out the one who caused the offense (Matthew 18:15, Galatians 6:1; etc.), and when you know someone has taken offense by you, you are to seek them out for your worship is hindered until you do (Matthew 5:23-24).

It’s Results

The results of forgiveness are reconciliation and restoration of the relationship. What was broken is mended so that there is once again unity. The resentment is removed and along with it any quest for revenge or punishment. There may still be necessary consequences for sinful actions that had taken place such as restitution or restoration of what had been damaged, but there is no animosity on anyone’s part in fulfilling it. There is no hatred by the one offended toward the offender, and while the offender should regret committing the sins, the consequences are seen as the pursuit of what is just and right and therefore not resented.

The results of forgiveness between humans should reflect what God has done for mankind. When God forgives sins, He casts the sins into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19) and removes the transgressions as far as east is from west (Psalm 103:12). While we may not be able to “forgive and forget” because the wrong done will still be in the memory, we can follow God’s example in Isaiah 43:5 and Jeremiah 31:34 to purposely remember those sins no more. That means you will no longer think about or bring up a sin that has been forgiven. We will apply love and “*not take into account a wrong suffered*” (1 Corinthians 13:5). Bringing up past incidents that were supposedly forgiven in a current argument is ungodly, unrighteous and unjust.

But that brings up a current problem with the whole social justice movement and its related evils of critical race theory and intersectionality that is fueling the current turmoil in society with never ending protests and frequent riots promulgated by the marxist “*Black Lives Matter*” organization and antifa operatives. Aside from the fact that the demands are being made from people who were not party to

whatever historical injustices are being claimed, there is no forgiveness and never can be. Why? To state it simply, their quest is not for parity, equality or correction of historical injustice. If it was, they would be happy about the radical changes in America since the 1960's instead of acting like racism is as bad now as the 1860's. What changes still need to be made are tweaking around the edges. American society is one of the least racist in the world - just ask those fleeing their home nations to come here. The quest of the social justice warriors is for vengeance and domination as seen in the constant demand for racial quotas and special privileges based on skin tone. That is creating systemic racism, but not in the direction they are claiming. All of this is bad in society as we see in the daily news reports, but it is heresy within the church for it is absolutely contrary to who we are in the Lord Jesus Christ and the commands found throughout the Bible.

The Scriptures are very clear that the children are not to bear the punishment for their father's iniquity or the other way around. Each person bears their own iniquity (Ezekiel 18:20). I cannot forgive you for something you have not done. You cannot demand confession and restitution from me for something I have not done. Generational feuding is evil. God does command us to forgive one another as He has forgiven us in Christ Jesus, so you must even be willing to pay the price of the other person's sin in order to bring about the peace of forgiveness and reconciliation so far as it depends on you. If there was injustice between our forefathers, so what? Do you not realize that even if there was injustice between you and me, when we come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is forgiveness from God that is extended to one another so that we are reconciled and become brothers and sisters in God's family. We have unity and peace with one another through our Lord. That has been the testimony of Christians throughout the ages between people who formerly had been enemies of one another.

Jesus makes it clear in Matthew 6:14-15 and 18:21-35 that those who are unwilling to forgive others do not understand the forgiveness He is offering to them and therefore will not be forgiven by the Father. Those who are unforgiving become bitter and jealous resulting in anger and malice along with their evil fruits (Ephesians 4:31, James 3:14; Hebrews 12:15). Roots of bitterness defile many whether it occurs in society, as we currently see in the news day, or if it occurs in the church resulting in turmoil and ungodly factions. Being unwilling to forgive is a sign of a depraved mind for it can only be maintained in a mind full of wickedness, envy, strife, and malice for it is unloving and unmerciful (see Romans 1:28-32).

Final Comments

This has not been an exhaustive study on forgiveness and reconciliation, but it has presented some of the basics while trying to correct some of the current major false teachings.

The goal for the Christian is to resolve conflicts and bring about reconciliation. It is a sad fact that in this sinful world, that will not always be possible even among fellow believers, but we are to strive for it never-the-less as much as it depends on us. The two key elements for forgiveness and reconciliation to happen are 1) A focus on the glory of God, and 2) Personal humility.

When the central question is "*How can I show my love for the Lord and glorify Him in this situation?*" most conflicts will quickly resolve, because most conflicts arise out of selfishness.

When both parties are personally humble, it is much easier to work through conflict. The one offended should not seek revenge, for that belongs to the Lord (Romans 12:16-21). They should examine themselves to see how they added to the conflict and quickly confess those things and seek forgiveness for them. They should be ready to forgive, but also be clear and honest about what will be needed to reconcile (restore trust). They should be prayerful, and they should remember that the enemy is Satan, not the offender.

Humility in the offender is seen by the marks of contrition: An open (non-defensive) and honest attitude about what they have done. Accepting full responsibility for what they have done. Does not continue in what they have done (or at least works hard not to repeat it). Willingly works through any

steps needed to restore trust. Makes restitution where necessary. Accepts accountability from others as needed. Follows David's example in Psalm 51 which is the classic passage of true repentance for sin.

Read Psalm 51 if time

For the choir director. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. ¹ Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions. ² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity And cleanse me from my sin. ³ For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me. ⁴ Against You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight, So that You are justified when You speak And blameless when You judge. ⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. ⁶ Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, And in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom. ⁷ Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. ⁸ Make me to hear joy and gladness, Let the bones which You have broken rejoice. ⁹ Hide Your face from my sins And blot out all my iniquities. ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. ¹¹ Do not cast me away from Your presence And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. ¹² Restore to me the joy of Your salvation And sustain me with a willing spirit. ¹³ Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners will be converted to You. ¹⁴ Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation; Then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness. ¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips, That my mouth may declare Your praise. ¹⁶ For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. ¹⁷ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. ¹⁸ By Your favor do good to Zion; Build the walls of Jerusalem. ¹⁹ Then You will delight in righteous sacrifices, In burnt offering and whole burnt offering; Then young bulls will be offered on Your altar.

May each of us, whether the offender or the offended, learn to quickly reconcile when there is a conflict that our God may be glorified by this practical demonstration of love and humility. That is what the heart that truly wants to worship God will do.

Sermon Notes - August 2, 2020
Forgiveness - Selected Scriptures

Danger Ahead

A Spiritual War - Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 Peter 5:8

Battle against the flesh, pride and the world - Rom. 7:14-25; 12:2; 1 Jn 2:15-16

The need for the body & accountability - Prov. 19:20; 9:8; 13:18

Fools reject wisdom, rebuke - Prov. 1:7, 32; 10:1, 8, 14, 21; 13:20

Admonish one another - Rom. 15:14; Col. 1:28; 3:16; 1 Thess. 5:14

Dangerous leaders & People: *Wolves - Acts 20:28-30; *False teachers - 2 Peter 2:1-3;

*Anti-Christ - 1 John 2:18-19; *The Factious - Titus 3:9-11; Romans 16:17-18

*Ear ticklers & Fickle People - 2 Tim. 4:3-4

Love disciplines - Hebrews 12:6; Prov. 13:24

Forgiveness

It's Need - Conflicts are inevitable

Differences of opinion - Acts 15:38-39. Selfishness & Envy - James 4:1-3. Misunderstandings

It's Attitude - Forgiveness arises from love

Forgiveness "*signifies the remission of the punishment due to sinful conduct*" (Vines)

Humble - Matthew 7:3-5; Phil. 2; 1 Peter 5:5

Always willing - Luke 17:3-4

It's Goal - Reconciliation

Peace & Unity - Gal. 5:22; 2 Tim. 2:22; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 2:1-4

Obedience to God - Matt. 5:24; Eph. 4:3; Col. 3:14

It's Offering

Willingness to forgive - Matt. 18:21-35; Matt. 6:15; 18:35; Matt. 5:7; James 2:13

Unilateral & Unconditional - Minor offences. Proverbs 19:11; 17:14; 1 Peter 4:8; 1 Cor. 13:5

Bilateral when relationships are broken

Relationships remain broken without a transaction of forgiveness

A truce - Genesis 31

Delayed reconciliation - Acts 15 (cf. 2 Tim. 4:11)

It's Requirements

Confrontation when sin occurs against you - Mt. 18:15; others - 1 Cor. 5:1-8; any trespass - Gal. 6:1

Steps of reconciliation and discipline

1) Personal - in person (Mt. 18:15), by letter (1 Cor. 5)

2) Mediator involved; establish facts - Matt. 18:16; Gal. 6:1 Example - Phil. 4:2-3

3) Tell the Church - Matthew 18:17

4) Let them be as a Gentile and tax-gatherer- Matthew 18:17

The Need for Repentance - Luke 17:2-3

God's example of forgiveness - Ephesians 4:32

Unilateral in offer - Rom. 3:11-12; Mt. 26:28; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14. Offer accepted - 2 Thess. 8, 9; Heb. 2:3

Repentance - Luke 24:46-47. Proper belief - Acts 10:43 Confession - 1 John 1:9

Seek peace so far as it depends on you - Romans 12:8

Reconciliation sought in all directions - offended (Mt. 18:15), offender (Mt. 5:23-24), observer (Gal. 6:1)

It's Results - Reconciliation & Restoration

A reflection of God's forgiveness - Micah 7:19; Psalm 103:12; Isaiah 43:5; Jeremiah 31:34; 1 Cor. 13:5

Current social turmoil lacks Biblical justice and is without forgiveness

You bear your own sin, not the sin of others - Ezekiel 18:20

Christians are to have unity and peace with each other because they have it with Christ

Summary Comments

Focus on God's Glory - *"How can I show my love for the Lord and glorify Him in this situation?"*

Humility in the Offended: * Do not seek revenge - Rom. 12:16-21. *Examine yourself - Matt. 7:5; Gal. 6:1-4

*Be ready to forgive, but also clear and honest; *Remember that Satan is the enemy.

Humility in the Offender: *Be contrite / repentant. *Accept responsibility, accountability & consequences

*Follow David's example - Psalm 51

KIDS KORNER – Parents, you are responsible to apply God's Word to your children's lives. Here is some help. Young Children – draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch. Older Children – Do one or more of the following: 1) Count how many times forgiveness is mentioned. 2) Talk with your parents about how to forgive someone that has hurt you

THINK ABOUT IT – Questions to consider in understanding the sermon and its application. What is the danger of spiritual warfare? Who is the real enemy? How does the armor of God (Eph. 6) help you to stand firm against the enemy? Why is humility such an important characteristic for Christians to develop? What is the responsibility of Church leaders in protecting the flock? How do they carry out those responsibilities? Why do you think there is such a lack of Biblical discernment among professing Christians? What are the major sources of conflict between people? What should be the underlying attitude of forgiveness? What is forgiveness? What is the goal of forgiveness? Why is humility required for both parties for forgiveness to take place? When and in what ways can forgiveness be unilateral and unconditional? When does forgiveness require bilateral involvement and action by both the offended and the offender? When are consequences required? What is the first step to reconciling with a brother in sin? What should happen if that step fails? Who should be involved and why? What should happen if that step fails? What should happen if a sinning brother refuses to repent and reconcile? Explain. Why is repentance necessary for reconciliation? What is required of a person to be forgiven by God through faith in Jesus Christ? Whose responsibility is it to initiate the process of forgiveness? What should be the result of forgiveness? Should decedents bear the punishment of their forefathers? Why or why not? Why is the "social justice" movement contrary to godliness? How much should you be willing to bear in order to bring about forgiveness and reconciliation? What actions and attitudes should the offended have toward the offender? Of the offender toward the offended? Read Psalm 51 as an example of true repentance.