

I. WHY IS FORGIVENESS IMPORTANT?

- Forgiveness is fundamental to the Christian religion. Fundamental in that it is something without which true Christianity does not exist. Christianity is unlike any other religious or philosophy in what it sets forth.
- Our greatest need as fallen sinners is forgiveness from God.
- God exists and is personal. He has given an absolute righteous standard above and outside of ourselves. It is the law of God. As human beings, we stand in obligation to that law for perfect obedience.
- When we sin, we break the law and have personally offended the supreme living being, and now have a serious problem. First and foremost, there is personal obligation. Yet, if we perfectly obey God from that point on, we cannot make up for what we have already done. We cannot get extra credit or points to apply to what we have done.
- There has to be payment in punishment for the transgression. One way to do this is the punishment of God's wrath. And because our sins will not cease (because we have become sinners by nature), even 1 million years in hell would not sufficiently pay, because we would continue to sin and add to the debt.
- This is why we need forgiveness. We need God to cancel our debt. We need Him to take what we owe Him that we can never pay, and somehow remove it from our account. This is where the Gospel comes in. It is the setting out of the historical reality that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came in the flesh and laid down His life as a life of perfect obedience, and suffered the penalty for sin. Because He was very God, He was able to absorb God's wrath for those who would believe on Him.
- So at least one part of the Gospel is that, because of Christ, God cancels what we owe Him in obedience that we can never make up or pay off.
- That being true for the child of God, there is now the reflection of God's image in doing the same. Now the believer is to display an example of what God has done for them by doing it for others. This is why understanding and displaying forgiveness is essential. Without it there is no true love. Without it we don't have Christianity. Without it we don't have Christian living.

II. WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?**A. What It Is Not****1. A Feeling – Luke 17:3-10**

- v.3 – It is to be granted when there is repentance.
- v.4 – It is to be granted repeatedly.
- vv.5-6 – It is to be granted with the faith one has.
- vv.7-10 – It is a matter of obedience, not feelings.

2. Forgetting

- Def. = unable to remember, cease remembering.
- There is no command in the Bible telling us to forget before we forgive. Though we should seek in most cases to put it out of our mind, just because we haven't forgotten, doesn't mean we haven't forgiven. We can forgive without forgetting.
- We are called to forgive as God forgives us, and He doesn't forget. There are passages which speak of Him "not remembering" (Is43:25; Jer 31:34). Because God is all knowing, it is impossible for Him to truly "forget" something. What it means is that He doesn't call it to mind to use it against someone. It is His choosing not to hold our sins against us.

3. Excusing Sin

- It is not merely saying "oh, don't worry about it." It is not minimizing what sin is. God does not do this.

B. What It Is***A declaration of a 3-fold promise***

- 1.) To not use it against them in the future (i.e. as a weapon to hurt). It may be necessary to use it redemptively, for the purpose of loving change.
- 2.) To not dwell on it myself. This will only breed bitterness. Must take steps to fight against it. Again, there may be necessary thinking about it for redemptive purposes, to come up with solutions.
- 3.) To not talk unnecessarily to others about it (who are not a part of the problem or solution).
 - This is a commitment and act of the will, not the emotions.

III. WHY SHOULD WE FORGIVE?

- God commands us to forgive others (Eph4:32; Col3:13) Forgiveness is an obligation, not an option.

IV. HOW CAN WE FORGIVE?

- Parable of the unforgiving servant - Matthew 18:21-35. It is understanding the great debt we owe and has been cancelled that we are able to forgive others. It is coming to the cross.

V. WHEN SHOULD WE FORGIVE?

- When there is repentance – Luke 17:3.

Repentance includes

- 1.) Sorrow
- 2.) Verbal confession
- 3.) Inward resolve
- 4.) Outward pursuit

- One of the most difficult issues is how to measure repentance. When is it enough to "prove" repentance has taken place? If it happens again at all, is this evidence that there is no genuine repentance at all.
- One of the ways to temper this with mercy is to ask "how do I want God to deal with me?", then pray "forgive my sins as I forgive those who sin against me" (Matthew 6:12, 14, 15).

Two follow up statements

- 1.) Forgiveness does not always remove the consequences of sin
- 2.) Forgiveness does not negate the necessity of rebuilding trust