

Forgiveness: God's Remedy for Sin

Part Two Various Scriptures

Big Idea: Even when the transaction of forgiveness breaks down, an attitude of forgiving grace must be evidenced by the fruit of the Spirit.

Introduction:

Last week we began studying together the biblical doctrine of forgiveness. What does it mean to forgive? How does a sinner ask for forgiveness? How and when should a person grant forgiveness? These are all relevant issues that the Word of God addressed with extraordinary clarity. As I said last time, I don't think it is possible to overstate the importance of this issue. We are all sinners. Even after the miracle of salvation, we all sin against God and one another. And when we sin, fellowship with God and men gets disrupted and broken and needs reconciliation. But every one of us in this room today knows people who are living with un-reconciled relationships. We've all been there. We know how miserable an existence that is.

- A. We know what it's like to live with a wife or husband where there sin has been committed but no biblical resolution has been sought or granted.
- B. We've seen, and perhaps have even experienced, the tension that engulfs a family when a teenager and his dad or mom live on opposite sides of an invisible wall.
- C. We've seen churches split because their members refuse to deal with sin in a manner that pleases the Lord.

But most of the time it doesn't have to be this way. Thankfully, God has provided us with the grace we need to reconcile with one another and with Himself regardless of who sinned or how badly. There is a remedy for sin! And it is called... Forgiveness.

I. Transactional Forgiveness:

1. Now, last week we learned that there are really four (4) aspects of biblical forgiveness. And we invested all of our time speaking exclusively about the first one that we call Transactional Forgiveness.
2. The idea of transactional forgiveness comes from Jesus' teaching in Luke 17:3-4 which reads "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."
3. We call this Transactional Forgiveness because there is a God-ordained *Transaction* that takes place between the person who sinned and the one who was sinned against.
 - A. First the person sinned against comes and presents his case in a gracious, tentative way.
 - B. In response, the sinner confesses his sin (identifying it with a biblical label) acknowledging that he has sinned against God and against this person and asks for forgiveness.
 - C. The one sinned against, then, graciously grants forgiveness remembering the great debt God forgave Him in Christ.

4. By the way, this is exactly what happens when a person becomes a child of God; when he is born again.

- A. First the Holy Spirit comes and presents His case to the sinner. He uses the law of God to expose the sin and smite the conscience so the sinner understands, and even feels, his guilty, lost and desperate condition.
- B. In response, the sinner cries out to God confessing that the indictment against Him is absolutely true, throwing himself upon the mercy of the court, pleading for something he doesn't deserve; Namely, forgiveness of sin.
- C. God then graciously grants a faithful and just forgiveness based on the horrible and bloody sacrifice made for the sinner by the Son of God on the cross. What results is eternal reconciliation and sweet fellowship between the sinner and his God

5. That's the ultimate pattern of forgiveness. It is the standard of forgiveness that all of our Transactional forgiveness is based upon. We see it both implicitly and explicitly throughout the N.T.

6. In fact, another key text demonstrating this essential aspect of the Christian life is found in Matthew 18:15; "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother."

7. The point, beloved, is that we need to learn this! God has graciously given us the remedy for sin. Like in the Chronicles of Narnia when Aslan provides the vial of nectar for Lucy that when applied can heal any wound, so the remedy of forgiveness applied to any sin will heal every guilty conscience.

8. Think about what happens when we don't address sin in our lives.

A. Psalm 32: 3-4 (read)

But... (v. 5)

Warning... (v. 9)

Happy outcome... (v. 10-11)

B. Psalm 38: 1-11

Here is an example of the psychosomatic illness produced by unresolved guilt in the heart.

Psy = Soul/Heart

Soma= Body

C. Prov. 28:13 "He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes *them* will find compassion.

D. James 5:14-16 Speaks of sin as a cause for sickness. In such cases, the "prayer of faith" (or the prayer of humble confession) will make the sick member well. James further exhorts the sick to confess their sins to one another. Why? Because all manner of disorder is caused by the malignant effects of a guilty conscience. This is true in the physical realm as well as the spiritual and relational.

9. Jay Adams writes:

Unforgiven sinners are vulnerable people. They often become intensely self-conscious. Even innocent words frequently are interpreted as personal attack. They interpret as personal affronts acts that have no direct relationship to them. A guilty person may claim that a sermon was a personal attack, or lacking the courage to do so, will object to some incidental feature of the sermon, or some supposed slight of the minister. To call such a person paranoid is to misinterpret the dynamics of his problems. On the other hand a man at peace with God and with other men is

problems: On the other hand a man at peace with God and with other men is invulnerable and can be bold as a lion.

10. Beloved, unresolved sin is at the root of every conceivable conflict and evil. But when the remedy of forgiving grace is applied through Transactional Forgiveness, healing, restoration and reconciliation almost miraculously appear.

11. This is what Transactional forgiveness is all about. But remember, there are another kind of forgiveness that we need to learn. The second is called...

II. Attitudinal Forgiveness:

1. The question that needs to be answered here is, what does an obedient, spirit-filled believer do when a brother does not respond well to a gentle and just rebuke? What if he has clearly causes an offense but is unwilling to own it?

2. The salient principal that governs this problem is rooted in Mark 11:25 (Read)

3. Notice with me that there is no transaction here between the one who has been wronged and the one who sinned against him. No, the scenario here involves one solitary believer alone with His God.

4. Here is a brother who is standing, perhaps in a worship service or a prayer meeting. Perhaps he is in his own favorite quiet place for prayer and he is standing with his arms lifted to heaven to commune and fellowship with His Lord. He has recently been stung by a sinful word or action from a brother... what is his responsibility?

5. In this case the responsibility of the one sinned against is simply to forgive. But he is to forgive not in a Transactional manner, but in an Attitudinal manner. In other words, he is to have a gracious, forgiving spirit that does not hold his brother hostage for the wrong that was committed.

6. As I said last week, there is no such thing as Transactional forgiveness without repentance. In other words, the transaction that God requires for full and complete reconciliation requires repentance. To tell someone "I forgive you" when the sinning brother has not asked to be forgiven is to dilute and ruin the remedy for sin that God has established and to do further harm to the relationship.

7. But there is danger here. The person who has been sinned against is in immediate danger to fall into the sin of bitterness. And when that happens, the original injury is compounded and doubled. First there was the harm done by the one who sinned against him from the outside. Then there comes this malignant disease of bitterness that begins eating away at the inside. It cannot be allowed, beloved. And God makes no allowance for it.

8. What is the remedy for the sin of bitterness? It's the healing nectar of Attitudinal Forgiveness. "When you stand to pray, forgive, if you have anything against anyone."

9. And notice, this is not just offered as a good psychological idea Jesus comes up with if you care to take His advice. No! This is a command, followed by a warning. Namely, that your relationship with God will certainly be disrupted if you don't forgive from the heart. We are simply not permitted to indulge the sin of bitterness in response to someone's unacknowledged sin against us.

10. But you know, its real easy to play Russian Roulette with this command. Its very tempting for us to say, "Oh, I have forgiven from the heart" when we clearly have not.

11. You see, the word of God doesn't just command us to do something in the secret recesses of our hearts without giving a "litmus test" for us and those closest to us to discern whether or not it is really taking place. How do we know whether we or someone close to us is responding to sin either with Attitudinal Forgiveness or the sin bitterness.

12. The answer is give to us in Galatians 5:22, the fruit of the Spirit. (Read)

13. Now before we get into this verse, let's look at the context.

A. The church of Galatia was experiencing some relational conflict.

We know that because Paul addresses it throughout chapter 5.

B. For example, vs. 13-15 (Read).

Clearly people were violating God's command to love one another as they love themselves. In fact, they were "biting and devouring one another" (v. 15).

C. What cure did Paul point these believers to? (vs. 16, Read)

D. Then Paul offers a list of sins that were tempting the brothers (v. 19-21, Read). And notice that most of them are relational in nature. In other words, they are sins that people commit against each other.

E. In contrast to these "deeds of the flesh" God give the "fruits of the Spirit." They are indicators that we are walking according to the Spirit rather than according to the flesh.

F. Notice how each of the fruits have to do with relationships.
(Explain)

G. So all of the fruits of the Spirit are obvious external indicators that the heart is keeping in step with the Spirit of God.

14. So when we are evaluating whether our own hearts or the heart of someone close to us is really engaging in Attitudinal Forgiveness, what we are looking for is the Fruit of the Spirit.

15. And notice with me the last phrase of this text that I suspect very few, if any, in this room have really wrestled with in terms of application. Paul concludes his list of the Fruit of the Spirit by writing these words, "against such things there is no law."

16. Here, I think, is the best way to understand that phrase. Paul's concern seems to be that we might either find in God's law or invent our own unstated law that says something like this.

A. That brother sinned against me and when I confronted him about it (seeking Transactional Forgiveness) he blew me off. Now, it wouldn't be right for me to especially loving to him right now. He might get the impression that the issue is closed, the transaction complete.

B. Or we might say, "Next time I see her I'm not speaking. She's getting the cold shoulder until I get an apology! Would it be right to act like nothing's wrong?"

C. Or I'm not going to express any joy in the Lord around that brother, or be especially kind or speak to him with a gentle tone. He might misunderstand my motive.

17. Paul is saying here, "Show me that law! Show me the place where God says "If a brother sins against you, start being impatient, unkind, harsh or disconnected. Keep punishing him till he repents!" There is no such law!

18. But this is how we often act, isn't it? Someone causes an offense and we wear it on our sleeve. We put on the long face, we change our tone in conversation with them, we disconnect. Brothers and sisters, can I be a little bold here? That's sin! That is a sinful strategy for dealing with an offence. That kind of behavior is nothing more than manipulation. It says, "I am going to withhold what you want until I get what I want!" So we give the cold shoulder, the silent treatment, the "go ahead and sleep in the doghouse for all I care" attitude. And all you are really doing is responding to sin with sin.

19. What do you do if a person slaps you on the cheek with some sinful word or action? Jesus says (Mat. 5)

Whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. 43 "You have heard that it was said,

'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

20. Turn the other cheek means we do not repay wrong for wrong. Rather, we respond to sin in a mature and Christ-like way. When the opportunity is right to address the issue privately, we pursue Transactional forgiveness. And whether the offending party responds well or not, we keep on waking with the Lord and exhibit before all men (even the offender) the fruit of the spirit.

21. Who knows, this kind of undeserved kindness and graciousness may be just the thing the Lord uses to bring the offender to repentance, just like the unbelieving husband (1 Pet. 3:1) who lives in constant disobedience to the word, yet is won to Christ "without a word by the chaste and respectful behavior of his believing wife.

22. Peter is saying that God may very well use the fruit of the Spirit in that believing woman's life to bring her husband to genuine Transactional Forgiveness with both God and his wife. But one thing is certain. He will not use her sin for that purpose.

23. So don't respond with sin for sin. When you are sinned against in a way that breaks fellowship between you and the other person, address the issue privately and graciously. Calling them to the joy of Transactional Forgiveness. And as you wait for that to happen, commit yourself to the kind of genuine Attitudinal Forgiveness that is evidenced to all by the sweet Fruit of the Spirit.

24. One of the questions I left you with last week was, "What do we do if the person who sinned against me has died?" Obviously, you cannot call for Transactional Forgiveness, but you can forgive from the heart. You can remind yourself of how much you have been forgiven, and just forgive. Don't allow bitterness to dominate your thoughts about that person. Give them, and their sin, to God knowing that He is able to address the issue infinitely better than you ever could.

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