

Father I'll forgive them

Matthew 6:12b

Intro. I want to look at forgiveness to one another, as a way to develop relationships as we live together in the Christian Community. It is a fact that some where, some how, some time, some one is going to hurt us and we will be charged with this difficult ministry of forgiving them.

Thought: Failure to forgive is to burn the bridge over which you yourself must pass at some time or other in your life. Problems in the Christian community are caused when we fail to forgive one another thus burning the bridge for them and for ourselves in the process.

Thought: Another thought about forgiveness is the fact that you must be hurt before you can have something to forgive.

But too often we want to avoid hurt and that is the reason there is so much loneliness in lives today. We would rather be loners than to be hurt or to have to forgive.

In Psalm 55:12-15 it tells us that much of the hurt will come from people within the church or Christian Community. It says *It is not an enemy who taunts me-- I could bear that. It is not my foes who so arrogantly insult me-- I could have hidden from them. Instead, it is you--my equal, my companion and close friend. What good fellowship we enjoyed as we walked together to the house of God.*

Lets take a closer look at this basic and important ministry which believers have with each other.

I. Forgiveness W/IN the Christian Community

A. Why we should forgive

The answer is found in Colossians 3:12,13 which can be summarized like this. *We should forgive others because the Lord has forgiven us.* Luke 12:48 says *to those who much has been given much is required.*

So the more our sins which have been forgiven, the greater the responsibility for our forgiveness to others.

Question: How many were your sins, which God forgave? What about mine? If we think we were a pretty good person and didn't do too bad, Lets put our evaluation in the light of God's holiness and see how bad we really were.

Now back to our Colossians 3:12,13 passage where we notice several reasons we are to forgive

- First, because we have been forgiven
- Secondly, because Christians are chosen vessels and we are to typify the one who chose us.
- Thirdly, because we are positionally holy and holiness doesn't hold grudges.
- Fourthly, because we are loved by God.

Thought: If His love drove Him to forgive us, it should also drive us to forgive others.

Question: Do you have a hard time with forgiveness? If you do you might want to think about these points a little more.

B. The extent of forgiveness

Psalms 103:12 says *we are forgiven as far as the East is from the West.*

God doesn't fish our sins up for us to relive, therefore we should be careful about our fishing up the sins of others in order to accuse them.

Question: How many of you are nursing old hurts that you won't let go of? Don't you think its time to let them go?

C. How we should forgive

Here I see the pattern set forth for us in the life of God. I would suggest that He forgives in a three fold manner and we should do likewise. We should forgive

- Willfully and freely
- Lovingly
- Completely

D. What forgiveness will cost us W/IN the Christian Community

It will cost us pride, selfish desires, position, pet projects, or any number of other things which seem big, but are actually of little consequence in the long run. But on the other hand lets think of what it will cost if we DON'T do it.

Personally, it will cost us sleepless nights, guilt, bitterness, nervous stomachs every time we see the person, ulcers and all sorts of physical and mental problems. Finally it will cost us the bridge we will need to cross sometime when we do something wrong ourselves.

Question: Have you been burning your forgiveness bridge just because you don't want to forgive someone who has hurt you?

Corporately it will cost us the following, at the very least, if we DON'T do it. A poor testimony to the lost and to the Lord, it will cost broken relationships, a lack of ministry progress etc. So what it cost us by doing it is insignificant to what it will cost us if we **don't** do it.

II. Corporate forgiveness

A. It is the basis for corporate power

The church or person who does not forgive is a weak, debilitated specimen. The church or person who does, is strong in God's eyes and this is the view that counts.

B. Corporate forgiveness must balance discipline

In I Corinthians 5:1-5 there was a serious sin and it needed to be dealt with which Paul did. In II Corinthians 2:6-8 there is forgiveness, love and restoration which Paul was exhorting the church to complete in this second letter.

C. Failure in both personal and corporate forgiveness in the Christian Community leads to further problems.

It can cause bitterness because people can see no end to their punishment. It continues by causing strained relationships which then snow ball into a poor testimony overall.

III. The challenge to make it real in practice.

Lets return to Colossians 3:12,13 where we notice

A . A correct perspective

Key words here are compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience. All of these are closely related to the fruit of the Spirit which is found in Galatians 5:22,23. These words give us the necessary tools to facilitate forgiveness.

When problems arise W/IN the Christian Community, the first thing is for us to take an attitude check.

Thought: We are to use these verses as a measuring stick in this process. We can decide to be gentle with one another. Remember that it is not so much, what we say, as how we say it.

B. A correct course of action

From these two verses we find the word patience. When we are upset about a situation, rather than hurry into a situation which might lead to having to forgive or ask forgiveness later we should take time to calm down and be patient in our assessment.

This proper course of action will help the forgiveness process because patient words will be healing, forgiving words. This proper course of action involves patience and then the next step is to forget the incident. Don't dwell on the past but together, plan towards future ministry.

C. A correct time

Don't put off till tomorrow what God wants you to do today. Phillips Brooks a Boston preacher back in 1893 said this. "You who are letting miserable misunderstandings run on from year to year, meaning to clear them up some day; You who are keeping wretched quarrels alive because you cannot quite make up your minds that now is the day to sacrifice your pride and kill them. You who are letting your neighbor starve until you hear that he is dying of starvation; or letting your friends heart ache for a word of appreciation or sympathy, which you mean to give him someday; If you could only know and see and feel all of a sudden that time is short, how it would break the spell! How you would go instantly and do the thing which you might never have another chance to do."

In closing, forgiveness is necessary for our entrance into the Christian Community in the first place, but also to develop proper relationships once you are a part of it. How good a forgiver are you? May God teach all of us to learn to be good forgivers in an unforgiving world.

If you find you have a hard time forgiving it could well be that you do not know the freedom and joy of forgiveness for yourself. If you would like to know this wonderful freedom in a personal way just read the following and follow what it says. You will be glad you did and so will others.

Realize you are a sinner Romans 3:23

Understand that the payday for sin is death or eternal conscious separation from God. Romans 6:23a

Know that there is a way of escape for you. Romans 6:23b and John 1:12

Desire to escape and pray this or a similar prayer.

"Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I am truly sorry for my sins, and I confess them all to You [name them]. Lord Jesus, forgive all my sins and come into my heart as my Saviour and Lord. I receive You right now. Help me from this time forward to live for You. Thank You for hearing and answering my prayer. In Jesus' name. Amen."

If you have questions please feel free to reply to this page.