

To Forgive or Not to Forgive, That is the Question. Matthew 18

Matthew 18:6–35 (NKJV)

.....⁶ “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. ⁷ Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!

⁸ “If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. ⁹ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.....

¹⁵ “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that *‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’* ¹⁷ And if he refuses to hear

them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

¹⁸ “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

¹⁹ “Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

²¹ Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”

²² Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

²³ Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵ But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. ²⁶ The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ ²⁷ Then the master of that servant

was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

²⁸ “But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took *him* by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’ ²⁹ So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ ³⁰ And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. ³¹ So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. ³² Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. ³³ Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’ ³⁴ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.

³⁵ “So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”

Introduction

C. S. Lewis said,
 “Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive.”

Lewis described forgiveness — “this terrible duty of forgiving our enemies” — as the most unpopular Christian virtue, yet one that lies at the heart of the Christian’s calling.

Jones, Robert D.. Pursuing Peace (p. 123). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

One pastor called forgiveness, the currency of the Kingdom of God. It is the means by which all transactions occur. Without it, there is bankruptcy and bitterness.

It is the currency with which everything else is purchased.

Reconciliation is purchased with forgiveness.

Peace and Unity are purchased with forgiveness.

Love and Joy can be...

Ministry Together...

Participation in the Lord’s Supper ..

Avoidance of Church discipline...

Harmony in the Home and Marriage...

Loving your Enemies. etc.....

Forgiveness is absolutely essential to a local church and any relationships in the church and in any of the families of the church.

No church or relationship can survive without a robust and healthy practice of Biblical forgiveness. Sadly, too many churches and relationships and friendships and marriages have been destroyed because of a lack of forgiveness.

Of all the things that you deal with in ministry as a pastor or elder, the lack of forgiveness and deep seated bitterness is at the top of the list.

I understand it when I see this kind of unforgiveness in the world, after all, they don't know what it is to be forgiven by God, so why should they want to forgive anyone.

But for believers in the church, we should be the most eager to forgive. We should be the father of the Prodigal son, who runs out to meet his boy who's coming home. We should be the ones lavishing forgiveness.

Unforgiveness and bitterness should not be named among us. It should be as rare as Baptist preacher who does not eat fried chicken. Frankly, too many of us have grown accustomed to allowing unforgiveness to occupy space in our hearts. And this can be for a variety of reasons.

1. We have forgotten just how much God has forgiven us and how willing He was to do so.
2. We have forgotten just how severe a sin unforgiveness is and what it can bring in your life.
3. We have forgot the honor of Christ and our responsibility to forgive like He did. Eph. 4:32
4. There has been some confusion on whether we forgive unconditionally or conditionally with repentance only.

You may ask, why now a message on forgiveness?
Why not continue with Romans 13?

Well, the reason is simple,

We just spent a number of weeks looking at one of the most difficult passages to practice in all of the Bible.

Romans 12:17–20 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil.....¹⁸ If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. ¹⁹ Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written,

“Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.

²⁰ Therefore

*“If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
If he is thirsty, give him a drink;*

Matthew 5:44 (NKJV)

44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

You will not be able to put this in practice without the virtue of forgiving your enemies.

Or let me ask this.....

Have you ever been wronged in such a way that you find it difficult to forgive? Have you ever been hurt so severely that you just can't let it go? Have you ever had someone say something to you or about you that cause you to be bitter toward them? Have you ever been lied too, deceived or manipulated by someone? Have you ever been physically hurt, emotionally mistreated, or sexually abused? Have you ever been taken advantage of or stolen from or unfairly treated? Has someone ever said something or done something that offended you? Have you ever been sinned against, not just once but so many times you have lost count?

Well, if you have, I would offer a welcome to the fallen world. Welcome to the sin cursed planet filled with sinners who sin on a continual basis. Welcome to the world that lies in the lap of the evil one that is occupied by men and women who find it easier to tell a lie and hurt others that to tell the truth and live in peace.

I would add also, if you are a christian, welcome to the imperfect church, where imperfect people who are on a path to complete sanctification still sin in the flesh and cause hurt and disappointment.

As one person once stated, if you are looking for a perfect church and you think you found it, you better leave it because if you stay, you will ruin it. If you think that christians can't sin and can't sin in a grievous way and cause extreme hurt and disappointment, then you might want to check your theology and your reading of the Bible and what you call reality. The Bible is filled with examples of men and women who followed God and where followers of Christ who sinned against others and sinned against God, sometimes in terrible ways. Moses got angry and struck the Rock David murdered so he could have another man's wife.

David and Solomon sinned in have many wives and concubines.

Isaiah recognized he was a man of sinful lips and lived among a people who had dirty mouths.

Peter, lied to Jesus and lied to others about his relationship with Jesus.

The Disciples where selfish, and self-centered and wanted the best places in the kingdom

Paul sinned against the high-priest with his mouth.

If there has every been a reliable proof of the Bible being the Word of God and not the word of men, it is that fact that God does not hide the sinful actions of the men of God.

If men, who are naturally self-rigteous were the authors of this book, I would read a whole lot differently. All the dark, sinful attitudes and actions of the prophets and apostles would be hidden or at least minimized.

My point is this. If you are alive, you will be hurt and sinned against. If you breath oxygen and are a human will will be done wrong at some point. If all you have is one relationship with one person your whole life, you will still not be exempt from pain.

And, if you are a Christian and only live among Christians, you will be hurt and sinned against. If you go to church and participate in the ministry of that church, you will be done wrong at some point.

And if you only make one friend in the Christian church and community your whole life, trust me, you are headed for pain and disappointment.

And sadly and unbiblically, I might add, some Christians have taken the wrong approach to this problem.

Some, because they have been sinned against and hurt or in an effort to guard against being sinned against or hurt, have opted out.

I mean, they have decided the best way is no way. They just won't participate. They won't come, and they won't open themselves to having a relationship with another believer. So in an effort to avoid the pain of being sinned against, they choose to sin against God by avoiding the clear commands of Scripture regarding the Christians obligation to each other in the church.

To be clear, God does not allow for you to hide and isolate yourself from hurt. In fact, God commanded the one another's of the N.T. and commands the assembly of saints and ordains that you to suffer from the verbal, emotional, mental and physical sins of others.

To run and hide is to stop the process of sanctification in your own life, and to remove the possibility of you being Christlike in a hostile and

sinful world and bring glory to God by how you respond to those who sin against you.

It is clear that God does not expect us to live isolated from the relationships that can cause of the most server hurt and pain. It is assumed by the many commands in Scripture of how we should respond, that we will be sinned against, sometimes horribly wronged.

For instance, God says,

1 Thessalonians 5:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.

1 Peter 3:8–9 (NKJV)

⁸ Finally, all *of you be* of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, *be* tenderhearted, *be* courteous; ⁹ not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.

So how do we do this.

FORGIVE those who wrong you, who harm you, who are your enemies or less than your enemies.

HOW

To be able to do this, we will need to understand a few things

And to do that we are going to build a house.

We are going to build a house that all of us can live in that will protect us from rain of bitterness that can saturate our soul and will provide for us warm grace filled place in the cold dark world we live in.

- 1. The Foundation** - God is a Forgiving God
- 2. The Floor** — Christ has Forgiven You
- 3. The Four Walls**— You must Forgive others
- 4. The Framed Roof**— Grace, Mercy, Trust.

1. The Foundation - God is a Forgiving God

A theme that clearly runs through the whole Bible is that God is a forgiving God. He Forgives sin and sinners and all sin is ultimately against God because to be a sin you have to violate or disobey His standard or his commandment.

So murder is a sin against another person but ultimately is sin against the one who said murders is a sin.... God

Yet God is a forgiving God. He forgives murderers, adulterers, liars and thieves. He loves to forgive blasphemers, homosexuals and idolaters.

He finds joy in canceling the offense, erasing the sin, casting it as far as the east is from the west.

His ocean of forgiveness has no bottom, and has no shore. It is boundless, limitless and unrestricted

No sin is so sinful that it can't be forgiven by God. No abuse is so bad that God can't restore the sinner. No hurt and offense is so extensive that it can't be swallowed in the waves of God's forgiveness

GOD FORGIVES

According to Exodus 20, in the context of the ten commandments, that will condemn you to death if you do not obey them perfectly,

says that, God **shows** "mercy to thousands"

Exodus 20:6 (NKJV)

God is a God who forgives

Psalm 130:3–4 (NKJV)

- 3 If You, Lord, should mark iniquities,
O Lord, who could stand?
4 But *there is* forgiveness with You,.....

Psalm 86:5 (NKJV)

- 5 For You, Lord, *are* good, and ready to forgive,
And abundant in mercy to all those who call upon
You.

Psalm 103:2–3 (NKJV)

- 2 Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And forget not all His benefits:
3 Who forgives all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases,

Isaiah 1:18 (NKJV)

- 18 “Come now, and let us reason together,”
Says the Lord,
“Though your sins are like scarlet,
They shall be as white as snow;
Though they are red like crimson,
They shall be as wool.

Isaiah 55:7 (NKJV)

7 Let the wicked forsake his way,
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;
Let him return to the Lord,
And He will have mercy on him;
And to our God,
For He will abundantly pardon.

Jeremiah 31:34 (NKJV)

34 No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Daniel 9:9 (NKJV)

9 To the Lord our God *belong* mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him.

Micah 7:18–19 (NKJV)

18 Who *is* a God like You,
Pardoning iniquity
And passing over the transgression of the remnant
of His heritage?
He does not retain His anger forever,
Because He delights *in* mercy.

¹⁹ He will again have compassion on us,
And will subdue our iniquities.

You will cast all our sins
Into the depths of the sea.

Jeremiah 33:7–8 (NKJV)

⁷ And I will cause the captives of Judah and the captives of Israel to return, and will rebuild those places as at the first. ⁸ I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned and by which they have transgressed against Me.

Exodus 34:1–7 (NKJV)

And the Lord said to Moses, “Cut two tablets of stone like the first *ones*, and I will write on *these* tablets the words that were on the first tablets which you broke. ² So be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself to Me there on the top of the mountain. ³ And no man shall come up with you, and let no man be seen throughout all the mountain; let neither flocks nor herds feed before that mountain.”

⁴ So he cut two tablets of stone like the first *ones*. Then Moses rose early in the morning and went up Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him; and he took in his hand the two tablets of stone.

⁵ Now the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. ⁶ And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, ⁷ keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,

Nehemiah 9:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ They refused to obey,
And they were not mindful of Your wonders
That You did among them.
But they hardened their necks,
And in their rebellion
They appointed a leader
To return to their bondage.
But You *are* God,
Ready to pardon,
Gracious and merciful,
Slow to anger,
Abundant in kindness,
And did not forsake them.

2 Corinthians 5:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Ephesians 1:7 (NKJV)

⁷ In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace

Romans 5:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,

Acts 13:38 (NKJV)

³⁸ Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins;

1. The Foundation - God is a Forgiving God
2. The Floor — Christ has Forgiven You

Colossians 2:13–14 (NKJV)

¹³ And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, ¹⁴ having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

1 John 1:9 (NKJV)

⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 2:1–2 (NKJV)

2 My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

His Forgiveness is Generous or Comprehensive

Luke 7:40–48 (NKJV)

⁴⁰ And Jesus answered and said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.”

So he said, “Teacher, say it.”

⁴¹ “There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴² And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?”

⁴³ Simon answered and said, “I suppose the *one* whom he forgave more.”

And He said to him, “You have rightly judged.”

⁴⁴ Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped *them* with the hair of her head. ⁴⁵ You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. ⁴⁶ You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil.

⁴⁷ Therefore I say to you, her sins, *which are* many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loves little.”

⁴⁸ Then He said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

His Forgiveness is Sovereign

Luke 5:18–24 (NKJV)

¹⁸ Then behold, men brought on a bed a man who was paralyzed, whom they sought to bring in and lay before Him. ¹⁹ And when they could not find how they might bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the housetop and let him down with *his* bed through the tiling into the midst before Jesus.

²⁰ When He saw their faith, He said to him, “**Man, your sins are forgiven you.**”

²¹ And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, “Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

²² But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, “**Why are you reasoning in your hearts?** ²³ **Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Rise up and walk’?**

²⁴ **But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins**” —He said to the man who was paralyzed, “**I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.**”

His Forgiveness is Compassionate, Merciful and Gracious

Matt 18:23-27

²³ Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵ But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. ²⁶ The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' ²⁷ Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

Psalm 138:1–8 (NKJV)

- 1 I will praise You with my whole heart;
Before the gods I will sing praises to You.
- 2 I will worship toward Your holy temple,
And praise Your name
For Your lovingkindness and Your truth;
For You have magnified Your word above all Your
name.
- 3 In the day when I cried out, You answered me,
And made me bold *with* strength in my soul.
- 4 All the kings of the earth shall praise You, O Lord,
When they hear the words of Your mouth.
- 5 Yes, they shall sing of the ways of the Lord,
For great *is* the glory of the Lord.
- 6 Though the Lord *is* on high,
Yet He regards the lowly;
But the proud He knows from afar.
- 7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive
me;
You will stretch out Your hand
Against the wrath of my enemies,
And Your right hand will save me.
- 8 The Lord will perfect *that which* concerns me;
Your mercy, O Lord, *endures* forever;
Do not forsake the works of Your hands.

