

March 14, 2023

Lesson Two

Review

What do you find so extravagant—so amazing—about God’s forgiveness for you? How many times has he forgiven you?

Why is it important to keep short accounts with God—to ask for forgiveness as soon as you are aware you need it?

Do you find it difficult to forgive yourself? Why?

When was the last time you told your story of forgiveness?

Psalm 40:2-3:

He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in Him.

What does it mean to be forgiven by Christ?

Romans 8:1-2:

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

Do you bask in the reality of "no condemnation"? Do you enjoy the forgiveness God has given you?

Ephesians 1:7:

*In Him we **have** redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.*

Jesus and Forgiveness

If anyone has a right to talk about forgiveness, Jesus does. Name some of the people Jesus had to forgive because of the way they treated him.

What was he accused of?

- Blasphemy

Matthew 26:65–66: *Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?”*

Mark 14:63–64: *The high priest tore his clothes. “Why do we need any more witnesses?” he asked. “You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?”*

If blasphemy alone had been the issue, one would expect that Jesus would have been stoned by the Jews, which was the biblically prescribed mode of execution for blasphemy.

Leviticus 24:16: *...anyone who blasphemes the name of the LORD is to be put to death. The entire assembly must stone them. Whether foreigner or native-born, when they blaspheme the Name they are to be put to death.*

That is why Stephen was stoned:

Acts 6:11: *Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, "We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God."*

We can tell from Pilate's reactions to the accusations brought against Jesus that the Romans did not see any threat from Jesus and could not have cared less whether he was guilty of blaspheme or not.

Luke 23:4: *Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no basis for a charge against this man."*

John 18:29 – 30: *So Pilate came out to them and asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man?" "If he were not a criminal," they replied, "we would not have handed him over to you."*

- A magician or sorcerer

Deuteronomy 13:1 – 3a: *If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a sign or wonder, ² and if the sign or wonder spoken of takes place, and the prophet says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them," ³ you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer.*

Leviticus 20:27: *"A man or woman who is a medium or spiritist among you must be put to death. You are to stone them; their blood will be on their own heads."*

Mark 14:58: *"We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with human hands and in three days will build another, not made with hands.'"*

People wondered by whose power he did his miracles. Scribes (legal officials) were brought all the way to Galilee from Jerusalem to give their legal opinion in this case.

Mark 3:22: *And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons."*

John 10:19 – 21: *The Jews who heard these words were again divided. ²⁰ Many of them said, "He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?" ²¹ But others said, "These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"*

The raising of Lazarus from the dead was a miracle of such magnitude and notoriety, performed in Bethany just over the hill from the temple in Jerusalem, that it raised legal issues that could not be ignored.

John 11:57: *But the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who found out where Jesus was should report it so that they might arrest him.*

Lazarus was also listed as a wanted man:

John 12:10 – 11: *So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.*

- Pretending to be equal with God

Mark 2:6 – 7: *Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, “Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”*

- Associating with sinners

Mark 2:16: *When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?”*

- Breaking the Sabbath law

Mark 2:23 – 24: *One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. ²⁴ The Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?”*

- Eating and drinking too much

Matthew 11:19: *The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ But wisdom is proved right by her deeds.”*

Jesus was mistreated constantly while on earth—constantly accused of doing wrong things.

Matthew 5:10,12: *Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

John 15:20: *Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.*

Jesus’ Teaching on Forgiveness

Matthew 6:14-15: *For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*

Luke 6:37-38: *Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*

And when the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, he told them to pray:

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Jesus used a parable to again reinforce how important it is for us to forgive other people. It’s found in Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times? Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

The servant fell on his knees before him, "Be patient with me," he begged, "and I will pay back everything." The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. "Pay back what you owe me!" he demanded. His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, "Be patient with me, and I will pay you back."

But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. Then the master called the servant in. "You wicked servant," he said, "I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you? In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.

Not forgiving someone, regardless of the situation or the hurt or their arrogance, harboring unforgiveness of any amount is dangerous. Never underestimate the danger of disobedience.

Jesus even made it clear that it had to be a certain kind of forgiveness: forgiving from your heart!

What is heart forgiveness? Does that mean that you must have nice feelings toward that person who has harmed you? Does that mean you overlook the harm and trauma they may have caused? What Jesus is telling us in this parable is that forgiving others must come from our heart, from deep inside us, and it comes because we want to obey Jesus.

You can't conjure up some sweet feelings toward someone who has hurt you, but what you can't do for them, you can do for Jesus.

Are you still hanging onto some unforgiveness? Jesus understands the challenge of forgiveness better than anyone else ever could.

If your fellowship with God is broken and your sense of his forgiveness is uncertain, could it be because you have not been willing to forgive from the heart?

Ephesians 4:32:

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

How have we have been forgiven in Christ?

- He forgives everything. There is no limit on his forgiveness.
- Jesus forgives again and again for the same thing.

You may have to go through some act of forgiveness all over again. Really what you have to do is reaffirm the fact that you have chosen to forgive from your heart.

- When Jesus forgives, he also forgets—he chooses to remember it no more.
- Jesus forgave even when they didn't ask him to.
- Jesus forgives regardless of the fact that we don't deserve his forgiveness.
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What/who do you need to forgive?

Like everything else in the Christian walk, forgiveness has to be a way of life. It's a lesson we learn at one critical point, where we turn a significant corner, but then we keep learning it again and again and again. You don't wipe out the pain, but you can live free from the burden and bitterness, no matter what has happened to you.