

The Gift of Forgiveness

Dec 26, 2010 ~ Luke 17.3-4

Read “I Hated My Daddy” ~ (Choosing page 56)

Andrew Carnegie and Henry Clay Frick

- Andrew Carnegie founded Carnegie Steel in 1892 (largest in world by 1900)
- Henry Clay Frick founded the Frick Coke Company in 1871 (fuel in steel mfg)
 - Carnegie bought out Frick – Friends & business partners from 1881 to 1899
 - They fell out (1899) c/Homestead strike (1892) and sale of company (1902)
- In spring of 1919 Carnegie sent a messenger to Frick seeking reconciliation
 - Frick replied “*You can tell Carnegie I’ll meet him. Tell him I’ll see him in Hell.*”
 - “*Meet You in Hell*” – is the title of a 2005 book c/their relationship
- Perhaps they did meet in Hell – Carnegie died in August – Frick in December . . .
 - And Jesus says in the addendum to Lord’s prayer (**Mt 6.14-15**):
 - “*For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*”
 - Heaven will be filled with “forgiven” and “forgiving” people

“Why Did I Choose this Topic?”

- 4 weeks ago I referred in passing to “*Amish Grace*” (a movie about forgiveness)
 - That afternoon I tried to describe biblical forgiveness but wasn’t successful
- A while back Phil recommended “*From Forgiveness to Forgiving*” by Jay Adams
- We – the church – must understand (*and exercise*) forgiveness
- I’ve read that plus 3 other books in recent weeks ~ most are flawed
 - “Dare to Forgive” by Edward M. Hallowell, M.D.
 - **Read excerpt from page 227** ~ “*Episcopalian, secular human being*”
 - “*Forgiving the Unforgivable*” by David Stoop, PhD
 - **Read excerpts from page 54 & 37** ~ “*I don’t like your God*”
 - “*Choosing Forgiveness*” by Nancy Leigh deMoss
 - Very good ~ no serious errors

The Normative Process of Forgiveness

- **Luke 17.3** ~ Jesus succinctly describes the normal process of forgiveness
 1. “*If your brother sins against you*”
 2. “*rebuke him*”
 3. “*If he repents*”
 4. “*forgive him*”

Xition: [Before we address other texts on forgiveness let’s address errors . . .](#)

5 Common Fallacies Concerning Forgiveness

- A. Do it for yourself (emotional & physical well being)
 - You may live better ~ but that might just be the absence of God's judgment
 - We are to obey God out of love ~ not just to avoid punishment
- B. It is a long drawn out process
 - This is quite common with psychobabble ~ (**read Dare excerpt – page 163**)
 - But the Bible says, *“Don't let the sun go down on your wrath”*
 - And we all know an unforgiving heart is filled with wrath
- C. You must also learn to forgive yourself
 - More psychobabble ~ nothing Scriptural about it
 - David wrote in **Ps 51** *“Against You, You only, have I sinned”*
 - We do not sin against ourselves ~ we sin against God
 - We'll address this later in the deaths of Jesus and Stephen
- D. Forgive and forget
 - We cannot forget on command ~ we will always remember
 - III: King wanted to turn lead into gold (wise men ultimatum - *elephant*)
 - But when a matter is forgiven we choose to never bring it up again (**I-O-U**)
 - But the knowledge of what happened may alter our behavior (*i.e., hedges*)
- E. Forgiving someone will only encourage them to continue to sin
 - I sometimes wonder about this as a forgiven Christian
 - *“Am I presuming upon God's grace ~ upon His forgiveness?”*
 - God wants us to be like Him . . . (**Rom 6.1-3** ~ abound)
 - **(1)** Jesus addresses this in our text c/repeat offender . . . (**v4**)

6 Additional Thoughts on Forgiveness

1. The immediate concern Jesus addresses is the repeat offender (**v4**)
- But there are other questions . . .
 2. What about the else of the if? (**Mt 18.15ff**) Escalation procedures
 3. In **Pro 19.11** we're told it is *“a glory to overlook a transgression”*
 4. In **Mark 11.25** (**read**) we're told to forgive others while in prayer
 5. We're told Jesus and Stephen forgave their killers (**Lk 23.34, Acts 7.60**)
 - *“Is this the true Biblical norm – to forgive without being asked?”*
 6. And lastly, a biggie ~ *“What about such dealings with unbelievers?”*

(2) Let's Next Address the Else of the If

- **Read Mt 18.15-17** ~ Escalation procedures
- God expects His children to behave
 - When they refuse to submit to His Word they are cast out . . .
 - III: Fighting over whiffle ball games at Yankee Lake (*rules*)

Xition: But must every sin be addressed in this formal way?

(3) No . . . For Love Covers a Multitude of Sins

- **Read 1 Peter 4.8** ~ “And above all things have fervent love for one another, for *“love will cover a multitude of sins.”*” (Quote from *Pro 10.12*)
- So you ask, “*What sins does love cover?*” ~ All that you allow it to . . .
 - *III*: Jay Adams describes this as the “*covers of love*” being thrown off . . .
- We all vary in the sins that we tolerate in one other
 - There is no “*fixed list*” of what is handled one way vs. another
 - “*But we should be consistent in our graciousness . . .*”

(4) When you Stand Praying . . .

- **Read Mark 11.25-26** ~ “*if you have anything against anyone, forgive him*”
 - This seems to short circuit **Luke 17** where rebuke & repentance are involved
- This covers sins handled via the shortcut (rebuke & repentance not required)
- Note the scope of this statement though ~ anything – anyone . . .
 - This covers small to large ~ believer to unbeliever
 - God takes our forgiveness or hard-heartedness very seriously

(5) What about Jesus and Stephen?

- Some say repentance of offender is not even required due to these examples
- At least 2 problems with this view
 1. Jesus and Stephen were being killed by unbelievers (*non-brothers*)
 2. Did Jesus and Stephen forgive their killers?
 - Jesus (**Lk 23.34**) “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.*”
 - Stephen (**Acts 7.60**) “*Lord, do not charge them with this sin.*”
 - They didn’t address their killers ~ they didn’t forgive them
- They addressed God ~ They prayed that God would forgive their killers
 - Earlier I talked about **Psalm 51** ~ all sin is against God

(6) Dealing With Unbelievers

- Unbelievers won’t abide by the precepts of the Bible
 - Quite frankly, professing believers often won’t either . . .
 - Attempting to follow the **Matthew 18** Principle can get churches sued
- So far we’ve discussed verses that deal with reconciling believers . . .
- We have other verses that covers interaction with unbelievers
 - **Rom 12.17-21 (read)** ~ “*Repay no one evil for evil . . .*”
 - **Mat 5.43-48 (read)** ~ “*. . . love your enemies . . .*”

Xition: We’ve addressed [5 fallacies](#) and [6 variations](#) of forgiveness . . .
Now let’s address [2 common misunderstandings](#) . . .

2 Common Misunderstandings Explained

1. Forgiveness is not typically unilateral (*one-sided*)
 - People want to simplify forgiveness to make repentance unnecessary
 - “*forgive*” occurs in Old Testament 44 times (NKJV)
 - 12 times “*atone -> forgive*” and “*hearing prayers -> forgive*”
 - Never stands alone ~ (*i.e., without repentance*)
2. Full reconciliation is assumed based on forgiveness
 - “*We must act as if it never happened . . .*”

Roles of Offender and Offended ~ Ready to Forgive

- The 2 parties to forgiveness have roles to play (**offend/rebuke – repent/forgive**)
- !!!: Go Cart Track ~ This simple cycle breaks down at several points
 1. The offended refuses to rebuke the offender ~ they either sulk or retaliate
 2. The offender refuses to repent
 - Instead they defend themselves and lay in supplies to sustain a siege
 3. Lastly, even if a rebuke and repentance occur ~ offended refuses to forgive
 - They refuse to emulate God as He instructs us to . . .
 - **Psalm 86.5** ~ “*For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive*”

Let Me Remind You of 2 Bible Stories

Jonah

- God commanded Jonah to go to Nineveh
- But Jonah ran away ~ We don’t learn why until **Jonah 4.1-2**
- Jonah wanted Nineveh judged – not spared
- He wanted to see God’s justice unleashed – not His mercy

Joseph and His Brothers

- Joseph sold into slavery at 17
- Falsely imprisoned in Egypt for 13 years
 - But he rises to become the 2nd most powerful person in all of Egypt
- Then one fine day his 10 brothers (*less Benjamin*) all suddenly appear before him
 - This is what had happened many years ago ~ irony – poetic justice
 - He could now do as they’d done . . .
 - He can kill them all then send for his father and brother
 - Instead he tests them c/Benjamin ~ He tries to keep Benjamin
 - But Judah ~ who’d sold Joseph ~ offers himself in place of Benjamin
- This story of redemption stretches for 14 chapters ~ from **Gen 37 to 50**
- **Jonah wanted vengeance and couldn’t get it . . .**
- **Joseph was served up a piping hot plate of vengeance and wouldn’t partake . . .**

Xition: Let’s focus for a minute on vengeance . . .

Vengeance is Biblical

- Vengeance is “*retributive punishment*” ~ it is justice of a particular sort
- Our culture might think it beneath a civilized society ~ but vengeance is biblical
 - 44 times ~ 41 in OT and only 3 in NT
 - **Is 35.4** ~ “ .. *Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, With the recompense of God; He will come and save you.*”
 - **Ez 25.14** ~ “*I will lay My vengeance on Edom by the hand of My people Israel*”
- But you say those are all Old Testament ~ and there are only 3 refs in New
 - **Read 2 The 1.6-9** ~ “*it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power*”

But Vengeance is Not Ours . . .

- **Deu 32.35** ~ “*Vengeance is Mine, and recompense . . .*”
- **Deu 32.43** ~ “*Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people; For He will avenge the blood of His servants, and render vengeance to His adversaries; He will provide atonement for His land and His people.*”
- **Lev 19.18** ~ “*You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.*”

“Are you a forgiving person?”

- Let me test you with 3 real-life scenarios . . .
- III: Waitress spills dessert on Senator before big speech ~ He kisses her forehead
- III: Man loses his wife in simple heart surgery ~ vows revenge ~ but then . . .
 - “*The only way I’m going to live with any peace for the remainder of my life is to forgive you.*”
- **Q**: **Read from Dare page 27** ~ Forgiveness requires exactly this ~ You need God
- III: Ernie Cassuto (Dutch Jew)
 - Came to Christ in prison through reading story of “*The Fiery Furnace*”
 - God asked Ernie to forgive Germans ~ though fiancée killed at Auschwitz
 - Years later called by commandant of former prison camp ~ dying
 - **Read from Choosing page 89**

Forgiveness is a gift none of us deserved . . . Yet God gave it . . .

- You must give it too . . .

Let’s Pray