

Forgiving Your Brother from the Heart

Matthew 18:1-35

Part Three

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I. Gaining Your Brother

II. Why must we forgive?

Peter is viewing the matter of forgiveness from the wrong angle – he has a _____ perspective. Jesus insists that we must have a _____ perspective – we must compare how much our brother *has wronged us* with how much *we have wronged God*. We forgive our brother not because he _____ forgiveness but because God has graciously forgiven us.

III. What is Forgiveness?

¹² *Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;* ¹³ *bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.* ¹⁴ *But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.* (Col 3:12-14)

A. Love as the Context of Forgiveness (Mt 5:44; Jn 3:16; Eph 1:4)

Forgiveness is an act of love. Love puts off anger, wrath, malice, gossip, and abusive speech and puts on *tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, and longsuffering*. Love enables us to *bear with one another* and to *forgive one another*.

While forgiveness is a manifestation of love, it is not the same thing as love. Love and forgiveness are distinct. Prior to coming to faith, all of God's people are *beloved* but none of us are *forgiven*.

It is entirely possible to love someone and not yet have _____ them. As a Christian, I am called upon to love everyone, even my enemies. It is my love for others, that makes me willing to forgive them given the opportunity,

B. Bearing with One Another (Pr 10:12; 17:9; Eccl 7:21-22; 1 Pet 4:8)

Love gives us two options for dealing with someone's sin: sometimes love _____ another's sin and sometimes love _____ their sin so that that sin can be confessed and forgiven. *Bearing with one another* is equivalent to *overlooking a transgression*. Because we love one another, we *bear with one another*. "Love covers a multitude of transgressions" (Prov 17:9). Solomon counsels us: "Also do not take to heart everything people say, lest you bear your servant cursing you. For many times, also, your own heart has known That even you have cursed others." (Eccl 7:21-22).

C. Forgiving One Another (Is 43:25; Jer 31:34)

1. A Commitment vs. Feeling

Forgiveness is **(1) a commitment given** (2) to a *repentant sinner* (3) that I will not *hold his sin against him* any longer. In Jeremiah God describes the nature of forgiveness this way: “For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (31:34). Similarly, in Isaiah God declares, “I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins” (43:25).

When I assure someone, “I forgive you,” I am making him a _____. “I will not remember your sin against you.” Forgiveness, therefore, is not fundamentally a *feeling*. I can forgive someone even when I don’t feel particularly forgiving.

2. Conditional vs. Unilateral (Ps 86:5; Mt 5:23-24; 18:15ff)

Forgiveness is (1) a *commitment* given **(2) to a repentant sinner**. While God *loves* all men as His creatures, He does not _____ all. There are people in hell. God only forgives those who are *repentant*. Forgiveness is *conditional* not *unilateral*.

While _____ is *unilateral*, *forgiveness is conditional*. I can *bear* with my brother’s sin *unilaterally*; I can *overlook* his transgression *unilaterally*; but before I can make a promise of *forgiveness*, the one who has wronged me must ask me to do so. Forgiveness is a promise given in response to a confession.

In love, we are to put away all *bitterness, anger, wrath, malice, and abusive speech* toward those who have wronged us. We are to do this so that when the opportunity arrives, when our brother seeks our forgiveness, we can assure them from the heart, “I forgive you.” Like God, we are to be “_____ to forgive” (Ps 86:5).

3. Not Remembering vs. Forgetting (cf. Is 43:25; Jer 31:34)

Forgiveness is (1) a *commitment* given to (2) a *repentant sinner* **(3) that I will not hold his sin against him any longer**. Jay Adams helpfully distinguishes between _____ and *not remembering*. Forgetting is a result of our creatureliness and sinfulness. To forget something is *passive*, it is something that happens *to us*. God never forgets. But God does promise to “not remember.” “Not remembering’ is *active*, it is a *promise* whereby one person (in this case, God) determines not to remember the sins of another against him. To ‘not remember’ is simply a graphic way of saying, ‘I will not bring up these matters to you or others in the future. I will bury them and not exhume the bones to beat you over the head with them. I will never use these sins against you.’”

Jay Adams explains, “When you say, ‘I forgive you’ to another, you make a promise to him. It is a _____ promise. You promise not to remember his sin by not bringing it up to him, to others, or to yourself. The sin is buried.”

IV. Conclusion