

Solid Rock Christian Church Manassas, Virginia

Bible Study - September 9, 2021

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Title: "When You Find it Difficult to Forgive Someone"

Subtitle: "Who is in Your Dungeon?"

Scripture Reference: Matthew 18:23-30

"Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying: Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt."

I. Introduction

A. During the Revolutionary War, a pastor named John P. Miller learned one of his greatest enemies was to be hanged for his crimes. At once, Pastor Miller set out on foot sixty miles to visit General George Washington and intercede for the man's life.

The general heard the request, stated that he was sorry, but he could not pardon Pastor Miller's friend. Miller said, "He's not my friend. That man is my worst enemy." Washington replied, "Well, that puts matters in a whole new light." Seeing the preacher's forgiveness for his enemy, General Washington sighed the pardon.

Then Pastor Miller quickly carried the pardon from General Washington another fifteen miles to the execution site, arriving just as the condemned man was heading to the scaffold. Pastor Miller's enemy was set free that day - by the pastor whom he hated the most. [*Reader's Digest*, September 1991, Pg 32]

B. At this point, you may be asking yourself, "Did the pastor's enemy become his friend?" Well, we don't know. But when Pastor Miller made that kind of effort to set his enemy free, he proved that he was the real free man.

II. Exposition [Part I]

A. In Matthew 18, we find a man who was quite the opposite of John P. Miller. Rather than setting his enemy free, he threw him into prison. Think about this - We are all in the process of either locking people up in prison or setting them free.

B. The slave in this parable owed a debt of ten thousand talents. A talent was not a coin as many people think. It was a measuring weight of about eighty to ninety-four pounds. A talent could be a sack of ninety-four pounds of gold and silver coins. You can imagine how much that would be worth. Just think about ten thousand of those sacks of coins. That was how much this slave owed the king.

C. In today's currency in the U.S., that would be about fifty million dollars. Someone calculated that at a slave's pay, it would take about forty-five hundred lifetimes to repay the debt. Since the slave could not pay off the debt, the king decided to sell his slave, along with his wife and children, and all that they had. Each family member would be taken to a different location, probably owned by different masters, and they would never see each other again.

D. So, the slave became desperate and did something ridiculous. He made one last attempt to keep this from happening. He threw himself on the floor before the king and wept uncontrollably. He no doubt could hardly get the words out of his mouth but in brokenness before the king, he said, "Have patience with me, and I

will repay you everything."

E. This was a desperate effort and think about this; it would take forty-five hundred lifetimes to repay the debt. This was impossible and beside that, no king would be so foolish as to think that the slave could actually pay off that size of a debt. But when the king looked at the brokenness and humility of the slave, something marvelous happened to the heart of the king. Instead of feeling anger toward the slave, he felt sorrow. The king's pity quickly turned into compassion because the slave had touched the king's heart.

III. Exposition [Part II]

A. Do you recall a time when you felt compassion for someone? That person touched your heart, and perhaps you were moved to help that person (if it was in your power to do so). This king was so moved that he released the slave of the entire fifty-million-dollar debt. His pity for the other man outweighed the talents.

B. This is what God has done for you and me through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ when you came to know Him personally. You had a debt of sin that was impossible to pay but when you humbled yourself before Him, and pleaded for mercy, God forgave you of your sins. The entire debt was forgiven. Our loving God will still do that for anyone, who with a sincere heart, would just ask Him for forgiveness.

C. You would think that the slave would be so grateful that he would forgive all his debtors as well. You would think that he would extend the forgiveness he received to others, but this was not the case. Instead, the slave found a fellow slave who owed him a hundred pence (i.e., denarii), which was about fifteen dollars. This was a significant amount for what a slave made in wages, but it was miniscule in light of the amount he had been forgiven.

D. The fellow slave threw himself on the floor, just like the slave himself had done before the king. He even said some of the same

words that the slave had said to the king. It would seem that these words would jog his memory and he would remember the forgiveness that was extended to him from the merciful king.

E. Since the fellow slave could not repay him, he choked him and threw him in the dungeon. We have no record that the fellow slave has ever been released and as far as we know, he is still in prison, waiting to be set free.

F. Perhaps you are choking some people right now. In your mind, your hands are around their necks, and you are screaming at them to repay the debts they owe you. When they can't, you throw them into the dungeon - the dungeon of your soul.

Comment: How many people are locked up in your dungeon? Every person that you refuse to forgive is imprisoned inside of you. Some have been imprisoned for only a few days. Others have been locked up for months, and some have been in your dungeon for years.

G. Every time you recall a hurtful memory, you make a trip down the stairs into your dark dungeon where all those unforgiven people are. You pull out your whip and lash those prisoners chained to the walls, making them pay for their crimes against you.

H. Perhaps your father is chained to that wall. He has been down there ever since you were a child. You pull a list out of your pocket of the mistakes he made as a parent. After you read the list aloud to him, you yell, "You did all these things to me and I'm going to make you pay!" You take your whip and lash him for each offense as he hangs helplessly on the wall.

I. Then you move to the next person. She talked about you behind your back. She was a vicious gossip who hurt you deeply, so now it's time for her to pay and your turn to get even. You pull out your whip and beat her unmercifully until she is unconscious.

J. You go from prisoner to prisoner until every person in the dungeon of your soul has been fully punished. Then you turn back around the room to make sure that you have not forgotten anyone

who hurt you. Everyone has been accounted for, so you put your whip under your arm and walk back up the stairs. This is your secret world, the dungeon of your soul. No one outside knows what you do down there.

K. Although you should feel relieved after serving justice to these people, you simply don't feel that way. Instead, you feel a sharp pain inside of your stomach. It is almost as if, instead of whipping them, you were whipping yourself on the inside.

L. You admit that no real satisfaction is found in tormenting those people. The constant thinking about them because of what they have done is wearing you down. Sometimes, you can't sleep, you toss and turn all night. Deep down you know you must forgive and release those prisoners in your dungeon, but you don't know how to do it.

M. Before you can be set free, you must ask yourself, "Am I willing to let go of my past hurts and pain? Am I willing to release those who have hurt me? or do I want to keep them imprisoned a little longer?"

Several things are necessary when it comes to forgiving those who have hurt us.

IV. First - We base our forgiveness on what God has done for us; rather than on what the person has done to us.

A. We may think that what the person did to us is too big a deal to forgive. Nearly everyone uses that as an excuse. But whatever a person has done to us is insignificant compared to the debt God has forgiven us. It's like the fifteen-dollar debt compared to the fifty-million-dollar debt. The two don't even come close in comparison.

B. The first principle of forgiveness is this: I cannot give away something I haven't first received. I can't give you fifteen dollars unless I have first received fifteen dollars.

C. I also can't give forgiveness to others unless I have first

received forgiveness from God. If He has given me fifty million dollars, then it would be very easy for me to give away fifteen dollars.

D. Forgiveness is not based upon how much someone else owes us, but upon the abounding mercy God has granted us through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

V. Second - We must let God heal our past wounds.

A. Unforgiveness means that we desire to hurt the people who have wounded us. It's like the little boy who was sitting on a park bench in obvious agony. A man walking by asked him what was wrong.

The boy answered, "I'm sitting on a bumble bee." The man said - "Then why don't you get up?" The boy replied, "Because I figure I'm hurting him more than he is hurting me!"

B. The healing process begins when we get up off the park bench. God will only heal our wounds when we stop inflicting pain upon the ones who hurt us. If we don't let God heal our wounds from the past, those hurts will turn into hate.

C. The seed of unforgiveness will sprout into the root of bitterness (Heb. 12:15), and the hurt we submerge within us will become a land mine. Then when someone places the slightest pressure on our area of hurt, we explode!

D. We must get up off the park bench and ask God to heal us of our hurts inside, and then we must let Him do it.

VI. Third - We need to feel compassion for the person who hurt us.

A. The king felt compassion for the slave. Forgiveness proceeds out of compassion, not anger. We might think that we can't forgive because we hurt too much, but the pain won't go away until we forgive.

B. It is impossible for us to forgive if we still feel hate for the person, so we must change the way we view the offender. Every time Jesus felt compassion for someone, He saw a real need inside

the person.

Point: In order to have compassion for people, we must look through the eyes of Jesus at their real needs.

C. Most people hurt others because they themselves hurt inside. I recall now more than thirty years ago, I attended the very first meeting of a Professional Counselors Conference, and one of the speakers had written a book titled, "**Why Hurt People Hurt People.**" The truths laid out in that book continue to be so profound.

D. Hurt people hurt others through releasing their hostility upon them. They, too, have a need for their inner wounds to be healed. Sometimes people don't realize how they hurt others. When Jesus had his hands and feet nailed to the cross, he said, "**Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.**"

[Luke 23:34] (KJV)

E. Did they know what they were doing? In one sense, they did. They had crucified criminals hundreds of times. But in the spiritual realm, they were blind; they didn't know what they were doing. This God-man was completely innocent but He took upon Himself our sin debt.

F. Many people who have hurt us are also blind to the injury they have inflicted. We must compassionately pray for the Father to forgive them for what they have done.

VII. Forth - We choose to pay off the debt the person owes us.

A. The king forgave the slave of his debt. That didn't mean the debt disappeared. It means the king decided to pay off the slave's debt rather than make the slave pay. It cost him something to forgive the slave, but somebody had to pay the debt. It could not be ignored.

B. People owe different kinds of debts. Some owe the debt of money. Maybe someone has borrowed money and hasn't paid it back, just like in this parable.

C. Some owe the debt of gratitude. We have done things for people, and they haven't thanked us for it, but they should. Some debts are apologies that people owe. They have done something wrong and owe us an apology, but they have yet to apologize.

D. To forgive people these debts, we must quit expecting them to repay us. Instead, we must choose to pay off their obligations for them, just like the king did. We must take our hands off their necks. We must stop choking them, trying to get them to repay; and we must make a deliberate decision to pay off the debt through our forgiveness, and never again ask them to repay it.

VIII. Fifth - We stop replaying the hurt on the screen of our minds.

A. Let me first say this; stopping the replay can sometimes be a very difficult thing to do. Whenever we are hurt by someone, we record the incident on the video tape in our minds. Every time we recall an injury, we hit the "play" button on the recorder in our minds and watch the hurt happen again.

B. The remembrance of the event will instantly bring back the painful feelings we experienced and every time we watch the "rerun" of the offense, we get wounded one more time!

C. The person may have caused harm only once, but because we keep replaying the tape, we experience the hurt a hundred more times. Our own unforgiveness causes the pain to be multiplied much worse than the original wounding.

D. When we forgive, we choose to stop recalling the past. ((I did say this could be difficult)). Forgetting doesn't mean we lose our remembrance of past events, but that we choose not to dwell upon past events that hurt us.

E. Because we have forgiven them, we make a definite decision to not call up hurtful memories in our minds.

IX. Sixth - We must release the person from our prison.

A. The king forgave and released the slave from the debt. We need to release the person who has offended us. Let him or her go! Unforgiveness will keep us chained to whomever we don't forgive. If we don't release that person, we will take the unforgiven person with us wherever we go.

B. When we go to bed at night, the unforgiven person is there to keep us awake. When we go on vacation, the unforgiven person travels with us to our destination. We can't get away from them. Wherever we look, that person is there ruining the trip.

C. The only way to get unchained is to forgive and release the person who has offended us. If you don't do this, you will need to make one more trip down into that dark dungeon and walk down the stairs one more time. As you open the windows, the light shines brightly inside. The prisoners squint as they see you approach, expecting you to beat them again.

D. But this time it's different. Instead of pulling out your whip, you pull out the key of forgiveness. You walk over to your father; also, to the one who spread gossip about you, and everyone else in your dungeon. You unlock their chains, and announce to them:

"I'm letting you out now and I'm not going to whip you any more. I'm setting you free and I release you from the prison that I have kept you in. But before you leave, I ask you, will you please forgive me for keeping you imprisoned for so long and torturing you for all these years?"

E. You watch them walk up the stairs and leave your dungeon. It's empty now. All that is left are the unlocked chains hanging on the walls and you now have a peace that surpasses all understanding.

F. It's been years since the dungeon has been empty. You can't explain it but that sharp pain in your stomach is gone. You are no longer tormented inside. Peace floods your soul, and you get the feeling that it wasn't them whom you set free. It was you!

Before we move to our interactive portion of the lesson, take a

few moments to reflect deeply upon this lesson and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart.

Ok, now it's time to participate in the interactive portion of our study. Please complete the biblical passages below by filling in the blank spaces. As always, each passage has been taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

"And be ye kind one to another, _____, _____ one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath _____ you."

[Ephesians 4:32]

"If ye _____ men their _____, your heavenly Father will also _____ you. But if ye _____ not men their _____, neither will your Father _____ your _____."

[Matthew 6:14-16]

"If the son _____ shall make you _____, ye shall be _____ indeed."

[John 8:36]

"Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying: _____ true _____, and shew _____ and _____ every man to his _____; And _____ not the widow, nor the _____, the stranger, nor the _____, and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your _____."

[Zechariah 7:9,10]

"It is of the Lord's _____ that we are not _____, because his _____ fail not. They are _____ every morning: great is thy _____." [Lamentations 3:22,23]

Things For You to Consider

- Make a list of the people in the dungeon of your mind. Be honest, and don't overlook anyone.
- Jesus didn't just die for your sins on the cross. He also died for the sins committed against you by people who have hurt you. Picture in your mind Jesus dying on the cross for those sins people have committed which have hurt you so deeply. Since Jesus died for those sins, you must let go of them.
- Individually forgive and release each person out of your dungeon. In prayer to God, declare out loud each person's name, and announce that you are setting them free. God may also lead you to speak to some people face-to-face.
- Destroy the mental tape of a time someone hurt you and ask the Lord to help you to no longer keep that person or persons in your dungeon. Then say, Thank You Lord for setting me free from unforgiveness.

I truly pray that this lesson has touched your heart and if there is any unforgiveness remaining within you, review this lesson again and again, praying as you do so, and allow the Lord to make you free.

((Notice that I didn't say - "set you free" but "**make you free.**")

Check out again very closely the words of our Savior in John 8:36.

Jude 3

Pastor Austin