“Life in the Kingdom: Free to Forgive”

Matthew 6:12, 14-15; Matt. 18:21-35; Ps. 103:8-13

(Notes based on the sermon by Pastor Steve Massey, Hayden Bible Church, 2/12/23)

Why would saved people ask God for forgiveness? BECAUSE WE STILL SIN! We have a redeemed heart that doesn’t want to hold a grudge, but we have flesh that pulls us the wrong way. Paul described his own ambivalence so well in Rom. 7:14-25. Let’s be clear: we don’t earn salvation by forgiving others. Jesus is speaking in Matt. 6 to His children, His redeemed people, who still sin. What happens when we don’t forgive? The unforgiving heart forfeits peace with God. The unforgiving heart forfeits communion with God.

In today’s scriptures, sin is likened to a debt. You and I are born with an immense debt, which we add to every day. We are unable to erase it or even work it off. In Matt. 18:21-35, Jesus is using hyperbole to indicate a staggering, unpayable debt. So, what is one to do? Repent, receive salvation through Christ, and follow Him obediently for the rest of your life.

**[I find it necessary to pause here to clarify: knowing the truth about repentance is not the same as repentance! Don’t ignore your sin. Don’t redefine your sin. Don’t attempt to pay off your sin balance by doing good works. Stop and PRAY right now to the only One who can help you: God Himself. The infinite Holy God became human and died on the cross for our sins. He suffered the legal penalty so we could receive His righteousness. He forgives and He keeps on forgiving! Is there anything stopping you from asking for that forgiveness right now?]**

The way is narrow that leads to forgiveness (Matt. 7:13-14; John 14:6). Once you are His, He will never disown you, even if your sin puts a strain on your relationship with Him. It’s still true that the unforgiving heart is an offense to God. He will work on you and work on you until you are able to forgive like He does.

Forgiveness is hard! But as a Christian, you are indwelled by the Holy Spirit of God to enable this type of obedience. He also says, “Watch Me, look at what I do.” (Ps. 103:8-13; Eph. 4:31-32). He enables and He provides the example of how to do it. Forgiveness is a relational commitment: the sin debt is cancelled; the record of the sin is blotted out relationally (Isa. 43:25). God doesn’t forget, but He chooses not to remember your sin against you! Once more: forgiveness is the way of the Kingdom, not how to get into the Kingdom.

How do you know if you’ve really forgiven someone? God’s forgiveness leads to relationship, not alienation. Our hearts remain open to reconciliation in the future. Please note that forgiveness does not guarantee reconciliation. Forgiveness is a one-way street; reconciliation is a two-way street. (Q1) Also note: saying “sorry” is not necessarily repentance. Two more notes: 1) Forgiveness does not remove the earthly consequences of sin. 2) The truly repentant heart accepts the consequences of sin.

We have been forgiven much, so may we be extravagantly merciful and forgiving people. May we keep our gaze on Jesus so we are able to obey our King’s command to forgive all who wrong us. Father, we want to become more and more like You. Amen.

**QUESTIONS:**

1. Explain this sentence in your own words.
2. What is the risk in waiting to “feel ready” to forgive?
3. How do you know you have truly forgiven a person?
4. In referring to Matt. 6:14-15, The Moody Bible Commentary says, “It is possible that He means, ‘If you do not forgive others, God will not forgive you,’ but this runs contrary to the very idea of forgiveness, which by definition cannot be earned. It is better to see it as indicating that one’s capacity for forgiving others is tied to the receipt of forgiveness from God. If one does not or cannot forgive others, it may indicate that he has not yet received forgiveness, so that forgiving others becomes an evidence of one’s forgiveness before God.” Discuss.

**“Grace Greater than our Sin”** (Julia Johnson)

1. Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,  
   Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt!  
   Yonder on Calvary’s mount outpoured,  
   There where the blood of the Lamb was spilled.
   * Refrain:  
     Grace, grace, God’s grace,  
     Grace that will pardon and cleanse within;  
     Grace, grace, God’s grace,  
     Grace that is greater than all our sin!
2. Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace,  
   Freely bestowed on all who believe!  
   You that are longing to see His face,  
   Will you this moment His grace receive?

**“Amazing Grace”** (John Newton)

1. Amazing grace! How sweet the sound  
   That saved a wretch like me!  
   I once was lost, but now am found;  
   Was blind, but now I see.
2. Through many dangers, toils, and snares,  
   I have already come;  
   ’Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,  
   And grace will lead me home.
3. When we’ve been there ten thousand years,  
   Bright shining as the sun,  
   We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise  
   Than when we’d first begun.