

FORGIVENESS: THE HORIZONTAL CONNECTION Devotional, Grimsby, February 22/15

INTRO: When we speak of the cross of Christ we are describing torture. The cross of Jesus was a horrendous experience. To say "*Jesus died on a cross*" is correct but to say "*The cross was used to kill Jesus*" is incorrect. Ending life could be accomplished many other ways in a much quicker fashion.

Yet we hear him saying, "*Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing.*" He was not asking His Father to overlook the sin. A holy God can't overlook sin. The penalty must be paid. The unspoken implication of what Jesus said was this-- "*Father, forgive THEM, and condemn Me instead.*" You see, there on the cross, Jesus took our debt. He took our sins upon Himself. What He said to the Father was, "Yes, *THEY'RE* wrong. *But charge their wrong to My account. I'll pay their debt to the last penny.*"

ILLUST: He Pay A Debt He Did Not Owe. Song + II Cor.5:21

LESSON 1- Forgiving Is Costly

- a. Even when we say "*pay attention,*" we are speaking of cost
- b. When we help someone we pay in time or money or stress factor
- c. Jesus gave his life for the undeserving. Remember, forgiveness costs!

CASE IN POINT

There was a slave once who robbed his master, and fled town. He met a man who was in prison. The prisoner was a Christian. They talked. Eventually, the prisoner led the slave to faith in Christ. Do you know what he did next? He told the prisoner he had to go back home to his master. But he didn't send him empty handed. He put in his pocket a letter to the Master. You know who wrote that *letter, don't you? It was Paul. Here's what Paul wrote to Philemon in behalf of Onesimus--Philemon 8 "If he has wronged you or owes you anything, put that on my account."* That's what Jesus said too. "*Put their sin on My account.*" Jesus' forgiveness involved an indictment. His own. He took our sin, our judgment, our hell.

Paul could write with assurance and knowledge, since he had been there, done that.

In the cross of Christ, Jesus forgave us! He *interceded* for us. He *intervened* for us. He *paid the full price* for us. Was Jesus' prayer answered? Yes. God did not strike down those at the foot of the cross. Just the opposite. A couple of months later, some of the **same people** who were at the cross gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. They listened this time. Not to Jesus, but to Peter. And 3,000 were converted. What did Peter tell them? We get an idea by reading what he said in his second sermon recorded in **Acts 3:14-17. V 17** "*And now brethren, I know that through IGNORANCE you did it...*" Thousands were saved. Luke tells us even some **Jewish priests** were

saved(**Acts 6:7**) Why were they saved? Because Peter preached a great sermon? No. Because the Savior prayed for them. Friend, did you realize the Savior prayed for **us**? Christ prayed for you and me long before we ever believed in Him (check out **John 17:20**).

Right up to his final hours on earth, Jesus preached forgiveness. He taught forgiveness in the Lord's prayer: "*Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us*" (**Matthew 6:12**). When asked by Peter, how many times should we forgive someone, Jesus answers *seventy times seven* (**Matthew 18:21-22**). At the Last Supper, Jesus explains his crucifixion to his Apostles when he tells them to drink of the cup: "*Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins*" (**Matthew 26:27-28**). He forgives the *paralytic at Capernaum* (**Mark 2:5**), and the *adulteress caught in the act and about to be stoned* (**John 8:1-11**). And even following his Resurrection, his first act is to *commission his disciples to forgive*: "*Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained*" (**John 20:22-23**).

DEFINITION:

- a. If forgiving an **insult**- "*to give up resentment or any claim to requital.*"
- b. If forgiving a **debt**- "*to grant relief from payment of.*"
- c. Know this: forgiveness is an act of God!**Mk. 2:7**. But since the cross, forgiveness is a human act toward fellow human beings. Forgiveness, when properly understood, is a Christian teaching.
- d. In other religions, forgiveness does not have the same force. . In **animism**, there is no awareness of a personal relationship with God. In **Hinduism**, all have to pay the inexorable consequences of karma in the wheel of reincarnations. **Buddhism** likewise knows nothing of a forgiving God. The idea is present in **Islam**, but there is no personal God and Father. Even in **Judaism**, forgiveness remains a limited experience, though forgiveness as developed in the NT adds dimension to the teaching of the OT
- e. I John 2:12 (This helps us see the force of having Christ)

SCRIPTURES:

- a. **Ephesians 4:31, 32**- Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.
- b. **Colossians 3:12-14**-as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.
- c. **II Corinthians 2:5-11**- If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you to some extent—not to put it too severely. The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient. Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. Another reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the

test and be obedient in everything. Anyone you forgive, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

MORE LESSONS:

2. We are called to imitate Jesus- **I Peter 2:21-24**
3. I can't always have it my way.
4. Sometimes it is lopsided and unfair.
5. Other times it hurts to be wronged, still I must forgive.
6. When I forgive I absorb the hurt of another! Think of Jesus.
7. Be aware of the greater good for the greatest number of people.
8. It is reasonable for us to expect to be forgiven in the Body of Christ
9. Harboring hatred hurts the hater.
10. We lose our God-to-me forgiveness if we don't forgive- **Matt. 6:14,15**

CONCLUSION:

In a state of humiliation, betrayal, pain of all kinds, and a sense of 100% injustice, a nearly-dead man struggles for enough breath to speak, saying "Father forgive them." This is to be our example. The world is not, Peter was not, David was not. Jesus is!

So, give yourself the honestly test

- Am I able to forgive when I know the other person is wrong?
 - Do I secretly rejoice in my offender's misfortunes?
 - Do I ever pray for his/her well-being?
 - Do I avoid that person's presence?
 - Do I ever sit in silence and brood over the wrong committed?
 - Have I sought for an opportunity to do him/her a favour?
 - Can I speak kindly of this offender to another?
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