

## Spiritual Forgiveness – definitely a “do or die” situation.

**Text:** Read Matt. 6:9-15

**Introduction:** He said what? Ten messages of Jesus I would rather delete.

It is interesting how this subject has ended up being the last one of our series, we have looked at and reflected on many of the important **spiritual qualities that are so none negotiable** in our lives as Christians (Spiritual Poverty, Purity, Commitment, Suffering and Love just to name a few) Jesus talked about these and others in such a way that most thought them to be very hard sayings in Jesus’ day, just as most still do today!

When all is considered however, the subject of **“Forgiveness”, or lack thereof, was one that highly dominated Jesus messages** and stories.

(EG: To answer **Peter’s question** of how many times one should forgive someone who has offended you? Peter proudly suggests SEVEN times. Jesus says “Seventy times Seven”, or basically, continually is what he is saying.

To explain the reason for this, He tells the parable of the **Unmerciful Servant** in Matt 18:23-35. The idea of the parable is to show **lunacy** of a person who has been forgiven so much, not being willing to turn around and forgive others of so little. He does not stop with the idea of the lunacy of such a situation, but then also finishes and repeats a **consequence of punishment** of such actions for those who do not do unto others as has been done to them. He closes the parable with the clear statement, *“So also my Heavenly Father will do to every one of you (imprisoned and tormented by others), if you do not forgive your brother from your heart”*.

The subject of forgiveness becomes the center of attention later on also when Jesus is having dinner at **Simon the Pharisee’s house and a worshiping Prostitute** crashes the party only to wash his feet with her hair and tears from her face and then bath Jesus feet in oil. To respond to the dread and accusations plainly visible on the faces of the religious people there, Jesus tells a short parable of the **Moneylender and two debtors**.

I believe what Jesus was trying to teach us, is that we need to all become more like the prostitute in our worship and actions. Firstly, by **acknowledging our sinfulness**, Secondly- by accepting **Jesus Authority and Forgiveness**, Thirdly- by being totally abandoned to **lavishly love Jesus, while at the same time showing forgiveness** and mercy to others seeking to also love Jesus. (Luke 7:36-50)

So the showing of Forgiveness, or contrastingly, having a spirit of un-forgiveness was a major theme in Jesus’s teaches and it was something that He highly valued in the lives of His followers.

**Context:**

**Sermon on the mount - Right time for Jesus to set things right in matters of faith and living.** ( Jesus also had the right crowd with him that day, seekers and so called “guardians” of the truth).

In a nutshell, in the sermon on the mount, Jesus first speaks in reference to the **Pharisees teachings**. You see the repeated phrase... “you have heard that it has been

said”. He then follows this with.. But I say unto you..” This takes place in 5:21-48 and touches on key subjects of **Anger, Lust, Retaliation and loving ones enemies.** In Chapter 6 and 7 Jesus then changes the focus from the Pharisees teachings to the **Pharisees actions.** This is where He includes His **message on the life or death teaching on the subject of “forgiveness”.**

In Jesus teachings there is a **common thread** and warning that links things together. It is found in the beginning of chapter 6, verse 1. Namely, **Beware of practicing your “righteousness” before Men and Not God.**

**The religious leaders had it All twisted up.** Where as, we should **give and pray in secret** to God, instead the Pharisees did it as a show to others, PRIDE. When it came to the matter of **forgiveness and their relationship with others,** they shut it down. When they really should have been focused on how they acted before others, they didn’t care less and only worried about their forgiveness with God.  
\*As believers we need to get everything in it’s right place!

Before we jump in a little deeper on this subject of Spiritual forgiveness or lack thereof, I want us to get..

#### **The Right Angle on this Hard saying of Jesus. Whose really to blame here?**

ESV Matt 6:14 -15 *"For if you forgive others their trespassers, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, **but** if you do not forgive others their trespassers, neither will your Father forgive your trespassers"* (some might think that this is not fair that God acts in this way towards us)

The Message Matt 6:14-15 Remember these words follow on the heels of the Lord’s Prayer. It says, *“In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do. You can’t get forgiveness from God, for instance, without also forgiving others. If you refuse to do your part, you cut yourself off from God’s part”.* (clearly shows this is all up to us and our decisions and actions we take)

**Message:** Spiritual Forgiveness – definitely a “do or die” situation.

#### **5 affects from harboring UN-FORGIVENESS in our hearts.**

1. **Un-forgiveness attacks us on multiple fronts.** (attacks our minds, bodies, emotions, and our spirits). TD Jakes, wrote a book earlier this year called “Forgive, so you can be forgiven”. I really liked some of his main points he makes:
  - Un-forgiveness doesn’t protect us. It poisons us. (the idea that not dealing with and comforting people doesn’t help us at all)
  - Un-forgiveness isolates us. It incarcerates us, not allowing us to love others. Un-forgivingness is a wall that blocks us from all the goodness life has for us.
  - Un-forgiveness unchecked, becomes a CANCER in our soul.
    - a. It is a cancer because it won’t stay where it starts. It spreads and enters all areas of our lives and all of our relationships (Children, Parents, friends, coworkers). It affects the way you treat other people, how you react in given situations, it affects your mood, your attitude and your behavior.

- b. It is a cancer because “it takes away from us the intensity we need to function in the moment. By harboring a attitude of un-forgiveness, we get caught up in empowering our history, and we do it at the expense of our future”.
- c. It is a cancer because “Its bad cells, eat up the good cells. In the end, you don’t have to only deal with things like hatred and malice in your life, but as a cancer, un-forgiveness will eat up your personality, your creativity, your energy, and your spirituality”.

\*It is way too much of a price to pay, to hold on to un-forgivingness!!

## 2. A stronghold of Un-forgiveness restrains us to be all that God desires us to be.

At the recent Men’s Retreat- one thing we talked about was how the impact our fathers had on our hearts, totally connects with the direction we take in our lives.

Often times the treatment of our fathers towards us when we were kids, when left unresolved, cripples us to being the warriors God has made us to be in His kingdom. The rejection or humiliation received earlier in our lives, causes us to hide and protect ourselves in front of others, not allowing God to use us profoundly for His Kingdom’s purposes.

(I am no expert – but I would say it is similar, if not the same, in women’s lives too).

See *Ezekiel 18:20*. Our past needs to be redeemed for the purposes of the Lord. Often forgiveness of others close to us is a big part of that process!

## 3. Our lack of forgiveness of others, can restrict the powerful work God wants to do in others.

Eg: **Ananias and Saul** – without the forgiveness of Ananias, we possibly would not have seen the impact of the Apostle Paul had in the early church period.

*Acts 9:13,17 “But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem... So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, “ Brother Saul (do you hear the forgiveness in these words?) the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit”.*

**Josephs** un-forgivingness towards his brothers. Without forgiveness of his brothers and all they did to him, Joseph would never had been able to see his Father again or save the Nation of Israel from famine.

## 4. Our lack of forgiveness majorly affects our fellowship with the Father.

One point of consolation here is that, I personally don’t believe, it is talking about our “**sonship**” here, rather our **relationship** with the Lord. Let me repeat how the Message translated this verse. It said, “*You can’t get forgiveness from God, for instance, without also forgiving others. If you refuse to do your part, you cut yourself off from God’s part”.*

God is still “your heavenly father” as the verse states, yet when you show un-forgiveness towards others who have offended you, you do however cut

yourself off from God's gifts of forgiveness, mercy, answered prayers and all sorts of other blessings. Even your worship becomes unacceptable to God.

**5. The lack of forgiveness in our attitudes and actions as children of God, mars the truth of forgiveness** set forth in the Gospel.

What better time to consider this than right now as we enter our time of celebrating Christmas. What was it in the angel's message to Joseph that turned everything around for the wellbeing of humanity.

*Look at Matt.1:18-21 with me. \*\*Joseph, SON OF DAVID. Promise of forgiveness and salvation. "Call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins".* It has been said, that "Christians are their own worst enemies", in that our actions not only often speak louder than our words, but also in opposition to our words.

I am amazed at a scripture that talks about Paul, generally a nice guy, who absolutely lost it in one occasion and of all things, with the top dog of the then known church, referring to Peter. But why, why did Paul totally lose it with Peter? What went down, for this to happen?

*Go to Galatians 2:11-14 for a moment with me. \*v.14 "But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel..."*

I think we would do well to evaluate our own lives to make sure that our words or actions, like that of un-forgiveness, or even absence of right words and actions, do not get us out of step with, or mar the truth of forgiveness set forth in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

**Why is a generously forgiving heart so crucial in our lives as followers of Christ?**

I have mentioned 5 negative affects that should compel us to see why un-forgiveness should not be entertained in our lives as followers of Christ. But allow me, for one more moment, to mention to you one positive reason why un-forgiveness should not have any place in our Christian lives. For me, this by far tops all of the other reasons! For me, it comes right back to our foundational understand and belief about salvation. I believe many people view Christianity and being a Christian like this.

It's as if by believing in Jesus they got a free ticket into Heaven. They know they are a sinner and probably will keep on sinning until the day they go to heaven. But because of their faith in Jesus and God's amazing grace they are forgiven, once and for all. Thinking like this has a lot of truth about it, but sometimes I think we fall into the trap of settling for less in our lives as Christians. Knowing we are saved, we allow for "little sins" like un-forgiveness to have its place in our lives.

I think things would change drastically and positively if we viewed our salvation from a slightly different angle.

You see salvation is not just some get out of hell, and ticket into heaven kind of deal. It is way more than that.

Salvation is about the restoration of God's divine image in our lives. It is when His redeemed image is seen in and through our lives that He is glorified.

- Mankind was originally made in God's image..God said it was very good.
- That image was marred in broken when we choose disobedience and sin instead of God and his blessings.
- Jesus's birth, and later death on the Cross, for our sins, redeemed us and restored God's image in our lives.

- Now as we live our lives as followers of Christ. As we obey His Word, and surrender each day to the Lord and choose each day to put our old sinful ways to death and instead choose to live with the power of the Holy Spirit ruling over our lives.

As we do this daily God's restored image is seen and reflected in our lives.\*\* *Use mirror prop to enhance the point.*

As God looks at us and sees His image in us, He is so happy and proud. When he sees us choosing to forgive others of the offenses they may have caused us, that's when He says, that's my boy or that's my girl!

He sees His clean and untainted work in us and He is glorified.

I am reminded of those verses that say, *"If anyone is in Christ He is a new creature, all things have past away, behold all things have been made new"*.

*"Though your sins were as scarlet, they have been washed, white as snow"*.

*"It is no longer I who lives, but Christ lives in me"*.

*"Now live in such a way, that they may see your good works (His image and reflection in your life) and glorify your father who is in heaven"*.

**Invitation:**

Last week Danny - give testimony to the spiritual rest God had miraculously provided. This week, with the subject of Spiritual Forgiveness –time of Reflection and Confession. Take a moment and look into the mirror. What is it that God sees in you? Ask the Lord to show you if you need to deal with some situation or person for which there is now a stronghold of un-forgiveness.

**Play Song:**

"Change this Heart" Sidewalk Prophets.