

HOW CAN I NOT FORGIVE?

SEPT. 17, 2017

Gen. 50:15-21 & Matt. 18:21-35

By any calculation, the servant's debt to his king was incredibly high. Ten thousand talents equaled, in today's money, millions of dollars. How does one get so far in debt? Better yet, how does one get out of it? Having mismanaged the King's affairs, the servant could not even come close to settling the account. Our debt of sin is like that. Psalm 49 says that 'no man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him.' No payment could ever be enough.

The manager of the king could, in no way, pay back all he owed. The king knew it also and he had compassion, canceling the entire debt. Now, how many people would forgive a debt of millions? None of us to be sure. But our God is like no one else. He knew of our hopeless condition, trapped in sin and not able to get out by ourselves.

By His mercy, our King forgives and forgets. The prophet Micah tells us, "Who is a God like You, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of His inheritance. You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; You will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea."

And this is exactly what God did when you and I were baptized. Our sins are forever gone in the waters of baptism. They are forgiven, forgotten forever.

Now we come to our second text. Joseph and his brothers. Because mom and dad showed favoritism toward Joseph, his brothers hated and despised him. Given the chance, they sold their own brother into slavery and then lied to dad, saying Joseph had been killed by a wild animal, causing great grief to the parents.

Years later, when they went to Egypt for food, Joseph was the one they had to deal with, not knowing it was Joseph. When Joseph told them who he was, they feared the worst, thinking Joseph would surely get his revenge.

But Joseph recognized that all that had happened to him was God's doing so that he could help his own people in their distress. Joseph forgave his brothers. Joseph's brothers had lived with their secret sin for many years, feeling they dare not tell the truth and face the consequences. Proverbs 28 tells us, "He who conceals his sins does not prosper but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy."

Our walk thru life isn't always easy, is it? As we face struggles caused by our sin it's more like trying to get thru the tangled mess of a jungle, wondering if we will ever find our way out. The most famous case of an unforgiving attitude in America

was the feud between the Hatfields and the McCoys. It started in 1863 and didn't officially end until 1891 and they shook hands in 1976. The two families signed a truce in 2003.

What kept the feud going was the thinking that there has to be revenge when someone does something to you. Oh, how the devil likes to have us think that. Why? Because this is not what God wills for us. Paul says in Romans 12: "Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'it is mine to avenge; I will repay' says the Lord."

People died and lives were ruined and changed because a spirit of forgiveness was not in their hearts. Our hearts are truly sinful and even we who love the Lord can, at times, fail to show forgiveness. At these times we should remember the words of King David who said to God: "Create in me a clean heart, O God and renew a right spirit within me."

Are there any family feuds in your life? Are all the relatives on a speaking, friendly basis or are there bad feelings that keep some from family functions? It is good for all of us to remember the words of Paul in Romans 12:18: "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."

There is a reminder about all this in the Lord's Prayer. And forgive us our trespasses AS we forgive those who trespass or sin against us. And Jesus adds this in Matthew 6: "but, if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

How can we not be forgiving people seeing how God has forgiven all of our sins of the past, present and future. When tempted to be unforgiving, may the unending love of our heavenly Father flood our mind and let us see our Savior nailed to the cross, dying a horrible death for all of us.

The first missionaries to Labrador found no word for forgiveness in the Eskimo language. They had to coin one, and they made a good choice: 'not-being-able-to-think-about-it-anymore.' Why is it so hard to 'forgive and forget'? Our sinful human nature is too good at remembering. Someone once said; 'I've buried the hatchet----but I've left the handle sticking up.'

Oh how hard it is to really and truly live a Christian life, isn't it? Peter reminds us in his first letter, chapter 5, verse 8: "Be sober minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world."

The devil will try every trick he can to cause us to say----I'll never forgive you!!! Think of what that means. If I don't forgive, I lose my forgiveness from God. I will spend eternity in hell because I would not forgive a little hurt----and Jesus forgives all

my sins so that I can go to heaven. May the Holy Spirit give us clarity of thought as we walk toward our heavenly home so that we will abide by God's will for our whole life here on earth and finally see Him face to face in the hereafter.

Amen