

Title: The Importance of Forgiving One Another

Text: Ephesians 4:32

Theme: Forgiveness is commanded by God, demonstrated by God, and will result in a healthy, effective church.

Ephesians 4:32

- I. Introduction – Forgiveness is God’s Nature
 - A. Beginning of OT – First sin, God provided means of forgiveness (Gen. 3:21)
 - B. Beginning of NT – Jesus came in order to save people from sins; there is no salvation without forgiveness (Mt. 1:21)
 - C. Very important concept – mentioned 64 times in the NT
- II. Basis of Forgiveness: Be Kind and Compassionate
Ephesians 4:32
 - A. Kindness
 1. Definition: having or showing a friendly, generous, and considerate nature; of a sympathetic or helpful nature
 2. God’s kindness is the basis of our kindness (Rom. 11:22)
 - B. Compassion
 1. Definition: sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it
 2. God is a compassionate God (Ps. 86:15)
 - C. Kindness and compassion aid tremendously in forgiveness
 1. Focusing on actions can lead to judgment
 2. Focusing on motives can lead to compassion
 3. We tend to judge others by their actions, and ourselves by our motives
 4. We can turn this around by assuming the best motives in others
- III. Necessity of forgiveness: Building health in the Body by forgiving one another
 - A. Context of this verse: the Body of Christ
 1. Bear with one another (4:2)
 2. There is one body (4:4)
 3. Oneness of the body (4:4-6)
 4. The unity of the body (4:3, 13)
 5. Building up of the body (4:12, 16)
 - B. Forgiveness described
(Ephesians 4:32)
 1. It is related to pardon—there is no more crime; no more “debt to society”
 2. It is a release from an obligation (usually financial)—there is no longer an obligation to pay; you no longer owe
 3. It is not an act of emotion
 - a. The feelings may come later
 - b. The feelings may never come
 - c. Feelings are inconsequential to forgiveness
 4. It is an act of the will
 - a. It is in obedience to the Spirit of God
 - b. It is by the power of the Spirit of God

- 5. It is a demonstration of love—it keeps no record of wrongs (1Cor. 13:5b)
- 6. It is not a removal of consequences or memory (Gen. 3:16-21)
- C. Forgiveness as relates to witness
 - 1. God's kindness leads us towards repentance. (Ro. 2:4)
 - 2. God uses our forgiveness to lead others to conviction and repentance (Pr. 25:22)
 - 3. We are called to love one another. They will know us by our love for one another (Jn. 13:34-35)
- D. Forgiveness as relates to warfare
 - 1. We forget who the enemy is
 - *Our mantra: "You are not my enemy!"
 - 2. When we don't forgive one another, we attack our own comrades/allies
 - 3. When we don't forgive unbelievers, we attack those we are called to rescue
- E. The problem of unforgiveness
 - 1. It uses emotional energy we could be using to serve the LORD, our families and the Body
 - 2. It enslaves us emotionally to that person
 - 3. It leads us to do vindictive things that are often foolish and childish
 - 4. We hurt other people
 - 5. We poison other people spiritually (live at peace or root of bitterness--Heb 12:14-15)
 - 6. Illustrated in the life of Saul
 - a. He should be leading a kingdom, but is focused constantly focused on David, a shepherd boy (emotional energy)
 - b. He is chasing David all over the countryside (emotional enslavement)
 - c. He pins David to the wall; he goes to the witch (vindictive, foolish, childish)
 - d. He mistreats his own son, Jonathan (hurting others)
 - e. He influences Doeg the Edomite (spiritual poison)

IV. Demonstration of forgiveness: By God

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- A. We forgive as He did because we are made in His image (Gen. 1:27)
- B. Timing of forgiveness: right away. He did not wait until we "got right" (Ro. 5:8)
- C. Degree of forgiveness: all sins/offenses. He forgave us of hating Him to the point of murder (Lk. 23:34)
 - 1. Jesus asked forgiveness for those nailing Him to the cross
 - 2. Offenses towards us are far less (the unforgiving servant, Mt. 18:21-30)
- D. Extent of forgiveness: fully. He forgave us as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:10-12)
- E. Goal of forgiveness: restore relationship (i.e. "cleanse relationship", 1Jn. 1:9)

Barnes' notes on the Bible:

"Let a man recollect his own sins and follies; let him look over his life, and see how often he has offended God; let him remember that all has been forgiven; and then, fresh with this feeling, let him go and meet an offending brother, and say, 'My brother, I forgive you. I do it frankly, fully, wholly. So Christ has forgiven me; so I forgive you. The offence shall be no more remembered. It shall not be referred to in our contact to harrow up your feelings; it shall not diminish my love for you; it shall not prevent my uniting with you in doing good. Christ treats me, a poor sinner, as a friend; and so I will treat you.'"

V. **Applying the Word**

- A. Is there anyone that I have not forgiven? Am I holding on to any offenses that have committed against me?
- B. If I am, why am I?
 - 1. What am I gaining through holding on to them?
 - 2. What am I losing by holding on to them?
- C. I purpose today to, by God's grace and power, forgive those who have wronged me
 - 1. Help me to have your compassion for them, Lord.
 - 2. Help me to remember that whatever they have done to me, they haven't hung me on a cross!