

A Proper Understanding of Forgiveness

Tonight we will explore something that is a mystery to unbelievers and sadly to many Christians as well, and that is forgiveness. In both the New Testament and Old Testament there are a number of passages which cover this subject, and for a Christian forgiveness should be of the utmost concern, because it directly affects our ability to relate to God, so a proper understanding of the subject should be of high priority to all of us

- There are three things involved in forgiveness that I would like to go over.
- 1. **Examination:** We each need a daily inside look at our lives, our patterns of behavior, our strategies for living, and our attitudes. **Psalm 139:23. 1 Corinthians 11:28** tells us as believers to examine ourselves before we partake in Communion
- 2. **Honesty:** An inside look is useless without honesty with God and with self. Deceit by way of self-justification or just plain denial, through which we seek to cover up our attitudes and behavior, is the enemy of spiritual growth and fellowship with God. **Proverbs 24:12**
- 3. **Confession:** Confession is saying the same thing about sin that God does. It is having the same perspective of that sin as God does. This must include more than simply rehearsing the sin, for God's perspective would also include forsaking that sin. **1 John 1:9**
- You may ask why do we need these three things in order to understand forgiveness?
- Let's define forgiveness. It means to excuse a fault or offense, to absolve someone from payment, and to clear them of blame or guilt. Scripture tells us that forgiveness must follow sin in order to remove guilt > **Ps 32:5**.
- If this doesn't happen then the devil will continue to press play and rewind in our minds when it comes to sin in our lives, causing our hearts to wrongly believe that we are not forgiven or that we haven't done enough in order for God to forgive us.
- These three things protect us from having these wrong thoughts and ideas concerning forgiveness, so to properly appreciate forgiveness we must understand what we have been forgiven of.
- 1st let's look at the Definition of sin: to transgress God's law, and sin can be broken down into three categories.
 - a. Sins of commission: doing what we should not.
 - b. Sins of omission: failing to do what we should.
 - c. Overt sin: murder, fornication, theft, lying, foul language, murmuring, and manipulation.

- Within these sins are what can be called > **Sub surface sin**: sins that we don't see on the outside but are bubbling within us on the inside like > Resentment, worrying, hatred, fear, pride, coveting, these are attitude sins.
- The way that we are to handle these sins are found in **Gal 5:22-25**- with the fruit of the spirit, this develops the believers spiritual character. Also we have what is called some **Root sins**: human strategies for handling life without Christ, things like self-management, self-preservation, self-righteousness, pretty much anything that begins with self can be put into this category materialism, it is a defense and escape mechanism that automatically kicks in when we feel threatened or afraid.
- All of this shows that we must have a Biblical view of sin in order to properly understand forgiveness, because when we don't then we'll resort back to the may self protections that we just went over, and example of this is found in > **Gen 32:6-12, 17-21, 33:1-2**- finally after realizing the bribes wouldn't work he aligned the mother's and children according to his favorites which again is him self-managing.
- We need to understand that the root of sin in all its various shades and colors is the sin of self-management. Self-management is the culprit that sprouts up like a weed and produces the other categories of sin with which we deal > Genesis 3:6-7
- Believe it or not most people struggle with forgiveness because that can't relinquish control of the situation, its hard for them to trust God to handle it Himself, move on someone's heart, and wait for them to act, instead they take matters into their own hands and usually it gets worse and not better.
- People like this tend to confess the surface sins, the obvious, but fail to see them for what they really are; the fruit of a deeper problem that we typically want to disregard or over look, one that is at the heart of man's sinfulness. That sin is the desire to run our own lives, to live independently through our human strategies for life.
- **Proverbs 28:9** brings these points to light. Notice the individual who rejects the word, their prayers are contemptible to the Lord. **Proverbs 28:13** tells us he who **conceals** his **transgressions** will not prosper but he who confesses and forsakes them will find mercy. The word **transgression** includes any sinful pattern. The word **conceal** includes any of the tactics people use to ignore, justify or deny sin.
- One excuse we often hear and are all prone to use is, "That's just the way I am." The implication here is that the weakness is someone else's fault and we can't change because this problem is a part of my make up. God says we can change because He has provided for us in Christ. **1 Corinthians 6:9-11**

- WARNING - When confessing our sin we must be careful not to ignore or **conceal** a specific sin in our lives. We can do this by being broad and sweeping, by saying, “Forgive me of all my sin.” Such a prayer may be a means of excepting some sin as part of one’s life style.
- When we fail to identify our sins, first by examination, then by honesty, and lastly by sincere confession, we **conceal** them. The person who **conceals** his sin, verse 13 says shall not prosper. The Hebrew text means, that he habitually cannot prosper so long as he continue to ignore or make excuses for his sin, he will not find the peace of God, nor real happiness, and certainly not spiritual success.
- The Hebrew word for prosper is “tsaleach”. In the Old Testament it is used of the person who finds prosperity through the work of God in and on His behalf because he has sought the Lord and followed Him. **Joshua 1:8, 2 Chronicles 26:5**
- On the other hand, when we hide or ignore our sin, we cut ourselves off from God’s purpose, blessing and strength. This means we forfeit deliverance, peace, rest, and spiritual prosperity. The abundant life that John 10 promises us regardless of our external religious behavior. **Psalms 66:18.**
- The second half of **Proverbs 28:13** gives us a special promise if two things are done.
 - a. We must confess our sin as explained earlier. This means we must honestly acknowledge all known sin, and admit to ourselves and to God that what we have done and are doing is wrong, sinful, and hinders our fellowship with God.
 - b. The sinful behavior must also be forsaken. According to Scripture this means replaced with godly alternatives. In the Hebrew text forsakes is a continuous action which would include the process of learning how to overcome and leave the sinful pattern behind.
- The danger in not practicing these things is that an internal root begins to grow within us that we don’t necessarily know is there > **Heb 12:14-15-** we are told to pursue peace with people, meaning there will be times of disagreement and sin in any relationship here on earth, but it is not supposed to define us, but propel us to apply what scripture tells us to do in order to have proper fellowship with God.
- To not do that, then we run the risk of falling short of the Grace of God that is available to us, causing a root of bitterness to spring up within us, causing not only trouble to us, but a defilement all around us, ruining God established relationships that are meant to bless us. Sadly I have seen this throughout my Christian walk, people unwilling to follow God mandated commands concerning forgiveness, and settling for the worldly comfort of separation instead of restoration.

- An example of this is found in the popular story of the prodigal son, most focus on the relationship between the father and son, and give a small glimpse to the response of the older brother toward his father's show of forgiveness toward his brother.
- **Lk 15:25-32**- the brother hears that his wayward brother has come home and instead of rejoicing he begins to critique the response of his father. He shows he would have rather his brother stay out in sin and shame than to come home and receive love and forgiveness. Even after their father pleads begs him to come in he refuses, remember the father is a type of God, and many respond to God just like this when it comes to forgiving others, this shows that in doing this they really disobey God.
- **V30** notice he separates himself by not even calling him his brother but "that son of yours" implying that this is the father's fault, he should have given him the party, disinherited the younger brother, who doesn't deserve forgiveness for all that he has done with his riotous living. A root of bitterness has grown within him, as the father points out that all that he has is his and yet you can't rejoice that your brother who once was dead is now alive and safe with us?
- Unforgiveness produces not only bitterness, but also un-thankfulness, along with a judgmental spirit, unable to accept anything that doesn't line it with their way of thinking, ready to tell God and others what they should do, instead of examining what God is calling them to do. It's as if a spiritual blindness takes over their whole life.
- It takes time and growth to be able to deal with some of our deep-rooted patterns, but we must be committed to the process and pain involved if we desire to experience true growth. Lastly, God promises such a person will find mercy. The word "mercy" in the Hebrew means, to love deeply and to have compassion. It refers to a special love, mercy, or compassion for the helpless.
- For those who because of their special problem or weakness need the uplifting love and aid of another. This has in view our natural helplessness and sinful condition which causes us to stumble and sin, even when as Paul stresses in **Roman 7:15**, we do not want to sin.
- So, this promise of mercy means not only forgiveness but also the blessing of divine love and provision, and the supply and power of God to overcome and to change. We must see, therefore, that the purpose of confession and forgiveness is **deliverance** from **sin**, the **removal** of **guilt**, and the **receiving** of **peace**.
- It is a means of restoration, fellowship with God, the filling of the Holy Spirit, effective prayer, spiritual illumination, and lastly a loving and ministering relationship with others, Amen!