

FORGIVENESS
The Way of Forgiveness
Colossians 3:12-13

April 25, 2021 am

HDBC

In 2015 Melissa Dahl wrote an article entitled, ***17 Things We Know about Forgiveness***. Well, let me say I read her list and I didn't know those 17 things. Included on the list were a few things we would expect to find. For example . . .

- #03 Humans are less likely to forgive public figures than loved ones.
- #08 Forgiveness comes easier for younger children.
- #12 For a healthier heart, be more forgiving.
- #16 Religious people are more forgiving than non-religious people.
- #17 The Amish are very forgiving

Then there were a few surprises.

- #15 The perfect model for forgiveness is a 20-step process. Nope!
- #11 Extroverts are kind of needy about forgiveness.
- #02 Cats never forgive!

Scientists have observed conciliatory behavior in many different animal species; the bulk of the research has been on primates like mountain gorillas, and chimps, who often follow confrontations with friendly behavior like embracing or kissing. Scientists have observed similar behaviors in non-primates like goats and hyenas; the only species that has so far failed to show outward signs of reconciliation are domestic cats.

That's the kind of research you come for, right? I hope not. My takeaway from that list is that we need to anchor our convictions and practices about forgiveness in the Bible. It teaches us what we need to know about forgiveness.

We've noted that the source of our forgiveness is found in the finished work of Jesus on the cross. When he declared ***It is finished***, it was finished. We've also seen the great example of forgiveness. Consider the words of Jesus from the cross, asking God to forgive those who were crucifying Him.

This morning we will consider the ***way of forgiveness***. We are called to forgive others. We find this in multiple places. But what does that mean? What is the way of forgiveness when it comes to forgiving others? The answer is found in understanding just how God forgives us. **Read with me Colossians 3:12-13.**

In this passage we find some of the key things that are to characterize the life of a Christ-follower. *Compassion. Kindness. Humility. Gentleness. Patience.* Then Paul adds that we are **to forgive one another just as the Lord has forgiven us**. He ties our forgiveness of others with the forgiveness we have received from Christ. He does a similar thing in Ephesians 4:32.

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ has forgiven you.

In each case we are called to model our forgiveness of others after the forgiveness we have received from Christ. The way of forgiveness when it comes to me forgiving others is found in the way God has forgiven us. To learn what it means to forgive others and how we are to forgive others, we must take a close look at how God has forgiven us.

So, with that in mind I want to share seven things that are true when it comes to God's forgiveness of us. **These same** things will provide the model for our forgiveness of others. We'll unpack that next Sunday. Today, let's consider seven things that are true when it comes to God's forgiveness of us.

1. Forgiveness is what He wants to do (Psalm 86:5)

For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive.

Forgive – This Hebrew word is never used in the Bible of anyone but God. It is equivalent to a divine pardon. That this pardon is based upon the finished work of Christ on the cross.

Ready - Root word means **to be a liquid and thus to flow easily**. **Wax of a candle** which is melted, or **ice on the roof** melts in the sun after ice storm. Idea of *haste, or diligence*. God is quick to forgive. Just as it is natural for melted wax to run downward, it is natural for God to forgive. **Picture of the prodigal's father**, waiting, looking, longing for the return of his son.

Nothing said in Bible about the severity of the sin or the quantity of sin affecting the forgiveness of God. His forgiveness covers it all. Nothing is beyond the scope of His forgiveness. **It is in His nature to forgive**. It is what He wants to do.

2. **Forgiveness is free but not cheap.**

God offers to forgive us and does not ask us to pay for it. There is nothing that I could offer to God that we be worthy of purchasing my forgiveness. That's why I am so glad He offers it freely. He gives to me what I could never earn. But, as we've said before, it comes to us with a great cost. That cost was fully paid by Jesus on the cross.

I think it was D. James Kennedy (of Evangelism Explosion fame) who coined the phrase describing GRACE as God's Riches At Christ's Expense.

We often make the mistake of measuring the value of something according to how much it costs us. What we receive freely, we may have a tendency to take for granted . . . to trivialize . . . to cheapen. Don't fall into that trap. It costs Him dearly. Always tie your sense of being forgiven to the cross. It costs Him dearly to forgive you! **It is free to us, but cost Him greatly!**

3. **Forgiveness is offered to all but given to some.**

This is a really important truth to grasp. Offered to all but given to some. I dealt with this last week, but want to reiterate it. The **offer is universal** but the **reception is conditional**.

Only those who repent & believe will be forgiven. Like any gift, forgiveness must be received and opened. We are forgiven only when we place our trust in Christ. This involves repentance and faith. Repentance involves turning from sin and self and turning to Christ as Lord. It means our desire and intention is to leave that life behind, choosing instead to follow Christ.

Faith, involves absolute dependence upon Christ. Trusting Christ alone for our salvation rather than trusting in our goodness. **Like you trusted the chair to hold you up when you sat down, only more.** Like trusting **the parachute** to bring you safely to the ground when you jump out of the airplane, only more. **Like trusting the doctor when he says you need a heart-lung transplant and leads you into the operating room, only more.** **He offers it to all but only gives it to those who respond in faith.**

4. **Forgiveness is unlimited in its reach**

Here's what I mean. The reach of God's forgiveness never falls short. Because of my short legs and arms there are some things that I cannot get my hands on, without some help. **Walmart the other day. I have limits on**

my credit cards. There is a limit to how much I can buy with each card. Not so when it comes to God's forgiveness. My reach is limited. God's forgiveness is not. No one beyond the reach of God's forgiveness. **No one** is so bad, so wicked, so selfish that God withholds His offer of grace and forgiveness. The idea that a person is too bad to be saved is man's thought, not God's reality.

Only in our minds have we determined that some sinners are worse than others. Only in our minds have we decided that some people are **harder to save** than others. Only in our minds have we decided that some people **deserve hell more** than others. Only in our minds have we decided that there is a **hierarchy of goodness** among sinners. None of that is true of God. **With God, forgiveness is unlimited!**

5. **Forgiveness is a commitment, not an emotion**

When God forgives it is a decisive commitment, not an emotional reaction. For that reason, it is unlimited in its duration. To put it another way, it is permanent. God does not forgive today, then take it back tomorrow. He does not waver in his forgiveness. He will not change His mind. He will never reverse course and take it back.

The most common word translated *forgiven* in the N.T. is *aphiemi*. It means *to release from legal or moral obligation or consequences*. When God forgives He makes a commitment that he will no longer hold the sin against person forgiven. He makes a legal declaration that we have been released from the penalty of our sins and are therefore no longer condemned. He does not simply set them aside for the moment, He erases them and remembers them no more.

As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. Psalm 103:12

He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins into the depth of the sea. Micah 7:19

Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross, was reminded one day of a vicious deed that someone had done to her years before. But she acted as if she had never even heard of the incident. "Don't you remember it?" her friend asked. "No," came Barton's reply, "I distinctly remember forgetting it."

That's the way it is with God. **God's forgiveness is permanent.**

6. **Forgiveness makes reconciliation possible**

When God forgives us it means we are no longer accountable for our guilt. But He does not stop there. He takes it a step further than simply eliminating our guilt, He declares us to be righteous. He takes away the negative, which is great, but then adds the positive, which is greater.

Declaration – We are forgiven. Pardon from our guilt

Declaration – We are justified. Received the righteousness of Christ.

This enables us to enter into a sweet and permanent relationship with Him. He forgives us not just to keep us from going to hell but to bring us into an intimate loving relationship with Himself.

Gregory Jones captures this: *People are mistaken if they think of Christian forgiveness primarily as absolution from guilt; the purpose of forgiveness is the restoration of communion, the reconciliation of brokenness.*

God's forgiveness is inextricably linked to reconciliation. No one is forgiven without being reconciled to God.

7. **Forgiveness does not eliminate consequences.**

If you have trusted Jesus as Lord then you are forgiven and saved. You no longer have to worry that your sins will keep you out of heaven and send you to Hell. Jesus has paid for your sins and there is no need to pay for them again. The Bible makes it clear ***there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*** (Romans 8:1).

However, this truth does not mean the consequences for our sins disappear. This side of heaven (in this life) we will continue to struggle with the consequences of our sins. **David was forgiven by God but suffered greatly in this life because of his sins of adultery, deception and murder.**

People often wonder, if our sins are truly forgiven by God, why does He allow us to suffer the consequences? Let me offer a few reasons.

1) As a loving father, he disciplines his children.

- 2) Suffering the consequences motivates us to not repeat the sin.
- 3) My suffering is a signal to others to not do what I have done.
- 4) God uses suffering to train us in righteousness.

Review: God's forgiveness of us

Forgiveness is what He wants to do

Forgiveness is free but not cheap

Forgiveness is offered to all but given to some

Forgiveness is unlimited in its reach

Forgiveness is a commitment, not an emotion

Forgiveness makes reconciliation possible

Forgiveness does not eliminate consequences

Before you can effectively forgive others, you need to experience the forgiveness of God. Have you? I want to lovingly and urgently call you to experience the forgiveness of God today.

Reminded of the old hymn, ***To God be the Glory***. Especially love the line that says, ***The vilest offender who truly believes, that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.***

This could be your day. This could be your moment. Will you cry out to Him in repentance and faith right now? If you will. He is faithful to forgive you!