



CHOSEN PEOPLE
MINISTRIES

FORGIVENESS IS A CHOICE



DAY 7



Let us look at two stories about forgiveness. The first is found in the Bible, and it

is one of the greatest parables spoken by Jesus on this issue of forgiveness, which was one of His favorite topics. The second is a well-known encounter experienced between Corrie ten Boom and a German prison guard.

The parable is found in Matthew 18:23–35, with a brief introduction to the story in verses 21–22. Take a moment and read the story—it will just take a few minutes!

Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.’ And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you.’ But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. Then summoning him, his lord said to him, ‘You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?’ And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.

Jesus indicates that someone who **receives** forgiveness can **forfeit** that forgiveness by refusing to forgive others. Jesus makes the point clear: “*My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his*

brother from your heart” (Matthew 18:35).

That was the terrible error of the unforgiving servant in Jesus’ parable (Matthew 18:23–35; see also Matthew 5:7; Mark 11:25). He did not rightly appreciate the forgiveness given to him. As a result, he was cut off from the forgiveness granted to him earlier, and his debt was reinstated (Matthew 18:34). The obvious truth Jesus presents is that forgiving others is positive proof of being forgiven.

Please do not misunderstand the Savior! He is not suggesting that there is any precondition for receiving His forgiveness other than faith (Ephesians 2:8–9). But true faith in Jesus comes with sincere repentance and desire to change. This faith, which is a gift from God, both turns us away from sin and sets us towards the Lord.

This wicked servant did not comprehend the Master’s gift of forgiveness, as he treated those who worked for him with such cruelty, exhibiting ingratitude for how he was treated. Again, our salvation is not based on forgiving others, yet it is also true that citizens of the kingdom of God are marked by the ability to forgive!

When Corrie ten Boom recognized one of her prison guards at a church speaking engagement, time seemed to stand still. All of a sudden, Corrie was back in Ravensbruck: the huge room with overhead lights, the mountainous heaps of dresses and shoes centered on the floor, the shame of walking naked past this very same guard. Corrie also thought of her sister Betsie, who did not survive the concentration camp. Corrie tells us what happened next, when this former prison guard sought her forgiveness.

And I stood there—I whose sins had every day to be forgiven—and could not. Betsie had died in that place—could he erase her slow terrible death simply for the asking? It could not have been many seconds that he stood there, hand held out, but to me it seemed hours as I wrestled with the most difficult thing I had ever had to do. For I had to do it—I knew that. The message that God forgives has a prior condition: that we forgive those who have injured us. “If you do not forgive men their trespasses,” Jesus says, “neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.” And still I stood there with the coldness clutching my heart. But forgiveness is not an emotion—I knew that too. Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can

function regardless of the temperature of the heart. “Jesus, help me!” I prayed silently. “I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You supply the feeling.” And so woodenly, mechanically, I thrust my hand into the one stretched out to me. And as I did, an incredible thing took place. The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes. “I forgive you, brother!” I cried. “With all my heart!” For a long moment we grasped each other’s hands, the former guard and the former prisoner. I had never known God’s love so intensely as I did then.[1]

As the Psalmist concludes,

“If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared” (Psalm 130:3-4).

[1] Corrie ten Boom, “Guideposts Classics: Corrie Ten Boom On Forgiveness,” Guideposts, accessed, <https://www.guideposts.org/better-living/positive-living/guideposts-classics-corrie-ten-boom-on-forgiveness>. Reprinted with permission from Guideposts. Copyright © 1972 by Guideposts, Carmel, New York 10512. All rights reserved. (www.guideposts.com)

Scripture Meditation:

The ability to forgive is a reflection of our salvation. It is not the basis but the evidence that the Holy Spirit has performed a real work of God in our hearts. Therefore, we really must view forgiveness as a spiritual duty for people of faith. This is at the heart of these Ten Days of Awe. Jewish people understand that forgiving others is not an option but an obligation.

May the Lord give you the power to be like Corrie ten Boom and forgive

those who perhaps have harmed you the most. Even God Himself does not “*mark iniquities,*” because if He did, none of us would be able to survive His judgment. Again, the Psalmist writes regarding our sin in Psalm 103:12, “*As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.*”

If God removes our sins from His view, how can we not try and do the same for those who have sinned against us?

Today's prayer:

Abba, thank You for Your forgiveness, and forgive us for the times we have failed to forgive others! At this time, we are especially burdened by the rise of antisemitism throughout the world. Use us to eradicate it and help the Jewish people to forgive those who have propagated it. May the bride of Messiah never be a stumbling block to them again! Instead, through a shared faith in Jesus, may we together show forth the glories of God and the *shalom* that can only come through receiving forgiveness from You and extending that forgiveness to one another!