

2-27-2016, COTR Texarkana

Title: Merciful or Vindictive?

Purpose: Provoke people to be merciful and forgive instead of seeking revenge.

Spiritual Truth: Do I forgive and show people mercy or do I seek revenge?

Text: James 2:13

Topic: Mercy, Forgiveness, Revenge, Justice

Series: What's Inside?

Series Purpose: Provoke people to develop godly character and personal values that reflect a Biblical worldview.

Merciful or Vindictive?

I. Introduction "What's Inside?" Series video

A. Review

A.1. Listen to messages @ChurchOnTheRock.org or on the COTR iPhone/ Android app

A.2. This is a series about character, personal values and the attitudes that guide us. Each week we'll contrast godly character and values with a worldly counterpart. Last week's message was called "Content or Complaining?" We asked the question, "Are we content in our circumstances or do we complain about what we don't like? The preacher was caught by his own sermon. Joke chicken spaghetti.

B. **Today** we'll ask the question, Do I forgive and show people mercy or do I seek revenge?

C. **Title: Merciful or Vindictive?**

D. **James 2:13 (NLT)** There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But **if you have been merciful, God will be merciful WHEN he judges you.**

D.1. Def. merciful: to be compassionate, to pity people who have done wrong and forgive them; to choose not to punish or seek revenge when I'm wronged; to treat an offender better than he deserves. To spare the offender from justice.

D.2. Def. vindictive: spiteful and relentless attempt to punish and get even; seek revenge

D.3. Def. revenge: To inflict pain or injury in return for an injury received or wrong done

D.4. Video: Wing clips *The Interpreter; Choosing Forgiveness*. Lesson: revenge will turn to bitterness and destroy a person who refuses to forgive; It's better to forgive.

E. **Purpose: Provoke people to be merciful and forgive instead of seeking revenge.**

F. **Spiritual Truth: Do I forgive and show people mercy or do I seek revenge?**

II. How do I want to be treated when I do wrong?

A. **Matthew 18:21–35 (NLT)** Then Peter came to him and asked, “**Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?**” 22 “No, not seven times,” Jesus replied, “but seventy times seven! 23 “Therefore, **the Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to** a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date with servants who had borrowed money from him. 24 In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. 25 He couldn’t pay, so his master ordered that he be sold—along with his wife, his children, and everything he owned—to pay the debt. 26 “But the man fell down before his master and begged him, ‘Please, be patient with me, and I will pay it all.’ 27 Then his master was filled with **pity** for him, and he released him and **forgave his debt**. (Purpose of the parable not about money but about how we treat people)

B. Background text:

B.1. 3 characters in the story: the master represents God, the 1st servant represents us and the 2nd servant represents people who wrong us.

B.2. Def. forgive: To pardon an offense or debt; to overlook an offense, and treat the offender as not guilty and not punish them; to turn justice over to God.

B.3. Traditional Rabbinic teaching was that an offended person needed to forgive a brother only 3 times. Peter upped it to 7. Jesus’ said “70 times 7”, i.e. no limits.

C. Lessons:

C.1. This passage illustrates the nature of God and His expectation for us. He is 1st loving and merciful and He wants us to be like Him. Ps. 103:8 (ESV) **The LORD is merciful** and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

C.2. We all need forgiveness because sin has a price tag we can’t afford to pay.

C.2.a Sin brings judgment in this life and the one to come. Ro. 6:23 (ESV) For **the wages (NCV payment) of sin is death**...(death is judgment in this life and the one to come)

C.2.b Col 3:13 (NLT) Make allowance for each other’s faults, and **forgive anyone who offends you**...the Lord forgave you, so you **must** forgive others.

III. How do I treat people who wrong me? Do I show them mercy or do I demand justice?

A. **Verse 28** “But when the man left the king, he went to a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment. 29 “His fellow servant fell down before him and begged for a little more time. ‘Be patient

with me, and I will pay it,' he pleaded. 30 But his creditor wouldn't wait. He had the man arrested and put in prison until the debt could be paid in full.

B. Text background:

B.1. The roles are reversed. He'd been wronged and he the power to decide what to do. He wanted mercy when he did wrong but justice when someone did him wrong.

B.2. He acted with vengeance (get even, punish, cause the borrower pain).

C. Lessons:

C.1. The Bible doesn't teach Christians can't pursue justice when wronged. Def. justice: doing what the law requires; awarding each his just due in a fair and impartial way. God designed a society built on just laws with just judges. The issue seems to be the attitude of our heart... I can seek justice without hating you and wanting to hurt you. E.g. shooting Charleston church, contrast other race driven movements.

C.2. Ro. 12:19–21 (NCV) My friends, **do not try to punish others when they wrong you**, (*ESV never avenge yourselves*) but wait for God to punish them...I will punish those who do wrong... says the Lord. 20...do this: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink. Doing this will be like pouring burning coals on his head." 21 Do not let evil defeat you, but **defeat evil by doing good**.

C.3. When we refuse to forgive, we cast people into a different kind of prison. We hire an attorney to destroy them, we flush their ring down the commode, we refuse to let the kids see dad or grandma, we spend their money, passive aggressives give them the cold shoulder. Jesus did the opposite on the cross: Luke 23:34 (NLT) Jesus said, "**Father, forgive them**, for they don't know what they are doing."

IV. God will treat us the way we treat others.

A. **Verse 31** "When some of the other servants saw this, they were very upset. They went to the king and told him everything that had happened. 32 Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, 'You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. 33 **Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?**' 34 Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt. 35 "**That's what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart.**"

B. Lessons:

B.1. This passage also illustrates the nature of God. God wants to be merciful to us but if we refuse to treat others with mercy He will treat us with justice and judgment.

B.2. The Lord was teaching that forgiveness ought to be in direct proportion to the amount forgiven. The first servant had been forgiven a debt he could never repay, and he in turn should have forgiven the man no matter what he did. Because God was willing to forgive us no matter what we've done. Eph. 4:32...forgive each other **just as God forgave you** in Christ. we'll reap what we sow

B.2.a Matthew 6:9–15 (NLT) Pray like this: Our Father in heaven...12...forgive us our sins, **as we have forgiven** those who sin against us...14 **“If you forgive** those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. 15 **But if you refuse to forgive others,** your Father will not forgive your sins.

v. Conclusion

A. **James 2:13 (NLT)** There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But **if you have been merciful, God will be merciful WHEN he judges you.**

A.1. The big question is how do I want God to treat me when I do wrong? Do I want to be judged or do I want mercy and be forgiven? If I want mercy from God then I must choose to give mercy to people who do wrong to me.

A.2. Imagine yourself to be the 1st servant: you raped someone, had an abortion, stole from your parents, hit your wife...and asked God to forgive you. Now think about how you treat your “x”, what you did to the person who took your job, how you treat someone from a different race.

B. **Do you have I had a vindictive heart towards someone that hurt you? Have you sought to get even and retaliate; do you punish them whenever you see them.**

vi. Response: Souls do you need God's forgiveness?

A. **Prayer: Is there someone you need to forgive? Is there a wrong you need to turn over to God and leave at the altar?**

B. **** Logos Bible Software and library, Noah Webster's first edition of An American dictionary, The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Baker encyclopedia of the Bible were used to prepare this message.*