

St. Matthew AME Church  
Orange, New Jersey  
Rev. Melvin E. Wilson, Pastor/Teacher

Women's Bible Study  
December 14, 2024

### **Fall Series: "The Power of Forgiveness"**

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding." Ephesians 1:7-8

#### **Session III: " Give Yourself A Break "**

"Repent, then and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord." Acts 3:19

#### **I. Review of Fall Series Scripture**

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding." Ephesians 1:7-8

- To speak of Jesus' blood was an important first-century way of speaking of Christ's death. His death points to two wonderful truths-redemption and forgiveness. Redemption was the price paid to gain freedom for a slave. Through His death, Jesus paid the price to release us from slavery to sin.

- Forgiveness was granted in Old Testament time on the basis of the shedding of animals' blood. Now we are forgiven on the basis of the shedding of Jesus blood-he died as the perfect and final sacrifice.

" For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins." Hebrews 10:4

" For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. Nor did He enter heaven to offer Himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own.

" Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and He will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him." Romans 9:24-28

- Among references to priests, tabernacles, sacrifices, and other ideas unfamiliar to us, we come to this description of Christ as our mediator appearing in God's presence on our behalf. We can relate to this role and be encouraged by it.

- Christ is on our side at God's side. He is our Lord and Savior. He is not there to convince or remind God that our sins are forgiven, but to present both our needs and our service for Him as an offering.

- We can have wonderful confidence in His saving work for us, doing away with sin-past-present, and future. He has forgiven us our past sin-when He died on the cross, He sacrificed Himself once for all, He has given us the Holy Spirit to help us deal with present and future sin.

GOD LAVISHES HIS GRACE ON US.GOD HAS MORE GRACE THAN WE HAVE GUILT.OUR SIN WILL NEVER BANKRUPT THE ACCOUNT OF GOD'S GRACE.

## II. Review of Session I: "The Master Forgiver"

"Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of His inheritance. You do not stay angry forever, but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depth of the sea."

Micah 7:18-19

- The Bible offers the truth about forgiveness that our souls desperately need. And, best of all, God Himself modeled how to do this even when it feels so very impossible.
- God delights to show mercy! He does not forgive grudgingly but is glad when we repent and offers forgiveness to all who come back to Him.
- Christ's work is contrasted with the work of the Jewish priests. The priests' work was never finished, so they had to stand and offer sacrifices. Christ's sacrifice (dying on the cross) is finished, so He is seated. The priests repeated the sacrifices often; Christ sacrificed once for all. The sacrifice system couldn't completely remove sin; Christ's sacrifice effectively cleansed us.
- Beware of anyone who tells you that Christ's sacrifice still leaves you incomplete or that something else is needed to make you acceptable to God.
- The Lord is a covenant-keeping God who will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. What a beautiful picture, our sins completely removed forever. The suffering and death of the sinless Son of God on our behalf made this possible.

"as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."

Psalm 103:12

• East and west can never meet. This is a symbolic portrait of God's forgiveness-when He forgives our sin, He separates it from us and doesn't remember it.

• We need never wallow in the past, for God forgives and forgets. We tend to dredge up the ugly past, but God has wiped our record clean. If we are to follow God, we must model His forgiveness.

"If you Lord kept a record of sins, Lord who could stand, but with you there is forgiveness, therefore you are feared." Psalm 130:3-4

• Keeping a record of sins or holding a grudge is like building a wall between you and another person and it is nearly impossible to talk openly while the wall is there. God doesn't keep a record of our sins; when He forgives, He forgives completely, tearing down any wall between us and Him. Therefore, we fear(revere) God, we can talk to Him about anything. When you pray, realize that God is holding nothing against us. His line of communication is completely open.

## III. " Follow the Leader"

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, Christ forgave you." Ephesians 4:32

- This is Christ's law of forgiveness as taught in the Gospels.

"For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive you." Matthew 6:14-15

"Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." Luke 23:34a

" And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins." Mark 11:25

- Jesus gives a startling warning about forgiveness, if we refuse to forgive others. God will also refuse us. Why? Because when we don't forgive others we are denying our common ground as sinners in need of God's forgiveness. God's forgiveness of sin is not the direct result of our forgiving others, but it is based on our realizing what forgiveness means. It is easy to ask God for forgiveness, but difficult to grant it to others. Whenever we ask God to forgive us for sin, we should ask ourselves, "Have I forgiven the people who have wronged me?"

"Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive."-C.S. Lewis

IF WE ARE TO FOLLOW GOD, WE MUST MODEL HIS FORGIVENESS, EVEN WHEN IT COMES TO US FORGIVING OURSELVES.

- Everybody makes mistakes in life. But that doesn't mean, you have to pay for them for the rest of your life. Sometimes we make bad choices, it doesn't mean we are bad. It means we are human.

#### **IV." How Many Times?**

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times. Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times." Matthew 18:21-22

- The rabbis taught that people should forgive those who offend them-but only three times. Peter, trying to be especially generous, asked Jesus if seven (the "perfect "number) was enough times to forgive someone. But Jesus answered, "Seventy-seven times, "meaning that we shouldn't even keep track of how many times we forgive those who are truly repentant, no matter how many times they ask.

#### **V."The Power of Forgiveness is Not"**

1. A message that diminishes what you've been through
2. A message that justifies abuse, or abandonment or affairs that are wrong, no matter how it's flipped or framed by others
3. A message that refuses to acknowledge how powerful feelings are and how powerless you can feel when you get flooded with pain triggered by memories
4. A message that demands you excuse the cruelest and most horrific crimes committed against you or those you love
5. A message that demands all relationships work out with all people-sometimes that is neither possible nor safe.

#### **VI. "The Core of Christian Living"**

" Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay says the Lord. On the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him, if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

- These verses summarize the core of Christian living. If we love someone the way Christ loves us, we will be willing to forgive. If we have experienced God's grace, we will want to pass it on to

others. Remember grace is an undeserved favor. By giving an enemy a drink, we're not excusing his misdeeds. We're recognizing him, forgiving him and loving him in spite of his sins-just as Christ did for us.

- Paul's command sounds almost impossible. When someone hurts you deeply, instead of giving him/her what he/she deserves, Paul says to be kind to him/her. Why does Paul tell us to forgive?

- Forgiveness may break a cycle of retaliation and lead to mutual reconciliation.
- Forgiveness may make the enemy feel ashamed and change his or her ways.
- By contrast, repaying evil for evil hurts you just as much as it hurts your enemy. Even if your enemy never repents, forgiving him or her will free you of a heavy load of bitterness. Unforgiveness is a bitter, resentful, angry prison cell and forgiveness is the key that unlocks the door that holds us.

- Heap burning coals on someone's head may refer to an Egyptian tradition of carrying a pan of burning charcoal on one's head as a public act of repentance. By referring to this proverb, Paul was saying that we should treat our enemy with kindness so that they will become ashamed and turn from their sins. The best way to get rid of enemies is to turn them into friends.

## **VII. "You Are Valuable "**

" For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a Lamb without blemish or defect." I Peter 1:18-19

- The fact that God sent His only beloved Son to die a painful death in our place assigns value to us and let's us know He loves us immensely.

- Christ paid for our misdeeds, secured our justification, balanced our accounts with God and cleared us from all guilt.

"He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification."  
Romans 4:25

- At the cross, Jesus stood in our place, taking what we deserved(punishment as sinners) and freely giving us what He deserves(every kind of blessing).His sacrifice immediately transformed us, through faith, from a state of being wrong to a state of being viewed by God as right through faith in Jesus.

- We no longer have to live in fear of God rejecting us because of our sins. When we do something that does not please God, all we need to do is repent, receive His forgiveness, and refuse to allow guilt to consume us.

## **VIII." You Have the Power"**

- Forgiving someone who isn't sorry, isn't easy. But here's the thing : you're not doing it for them. You're doing it for you.

- There's a moment when you realize that holding onto the pain, the anger, the resentment is only giving them more control over your life. And that's when you find the strength to let go.

- It's not about them, it's about you taking your power back.

- It is about refusing to let anyone have that much space in your heart.

YOU DON'T NEED THEIR APOLOGY TO HEAL

YOU DON'T NEED THEM TO ADMIT THEY WERE WRONG FOR YOU TO MOVE ON AND GROW.

- You have the power to release yourself from that burden.
- When you forgive someone who hasn't apologized, you're not weak, you are incredibly strong.

## YOU ARE CHOOSING YOUR PEACE.

• And when you finally let go, when you stop waiting for what they should have said, you'll realize how strong you really are, and that's when the real freedom begins.

### **IX. "It's Up to You"**

• The more our pain consumes us, the more it will control us. The person or people who hurt us has caused enough pain. There's been enough damage done. What do you do with your pain?

1. Acknowledge your pain.

2. What should you do with the feelings resulting from the pain?

- Own the pain. Own the pain as yours to control. The hurt was caused by someone else, but the resulting feelings are yours to manage. You cannot manage feelings, you don't own.

• You can't wait for another person to do something to make you feel better about the situation.

• If you need another person to make things right before you move toward change. You may stay unhealed for a very long time. You can paralyze your progress waiting for something that may or may not ever happen.

• That person who hurt you may be the cause of the pain. But they are not capable of being the healer of your pain or the restorer of your life.

## **THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS**