

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

Women's Bible Study
Saturday, November 16, 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 II: "Follow the Leader "

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

I. 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 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.

- 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.

"A MORE EXCELLENT WAY"

"But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins, therefore when Christ came into the world, He said: Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me, with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said," Here I am, it is written about me in the scroll, I have come to do your will, O' God." Hebrews 10:3-8

- Animal sacrifices could not take away sins; they provided only a temporary way to deal with sin until Jesus came to deal with sin permanently. How then were people forgiven in Old Testament times? Because Old Testament believers were following God's command to offer sacrifices, He graciously forgave them, when by faith, they made their sacrifices. But that practice looked forward to Christ's perfect sacrifice. Christ's way was superior to the Old Testament way because the old way pointed to what Christ would do to take away sins.

II. "Comparing the Old with the New"

Old System	New System
<p>1. Was temporary</p> <p>Hebrews 8:13. "By calling this covenant "new", He has made the first one obsolete, and what is obsolete will soon disappear.</p>	<p>1. Is Permanent</p> <p>Hebrews 7:21 " But He became a priest with an oath when God said to Him: "The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind: "You are a priest forever. "</p>
<p>2. Aaron, first high priest.</p> <p>Lev.16:32. "The priest who is anointed and ordained to succeed his father as High Priest is to make atonement. He is to put on the sacred linen garments.</p>	<p>2. Jesus, the Only High Priest.</p> <p>Heb.4:14 "Therefore, since we have a Great High Priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess."</p>
<p>3. Ministered on earth.</p> <p>Heb.8:4. "If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already men who offer the gifts prescribed by the law.</p>	<p>3. Ministers in heaven.</p> <p>Hebrews 8:1,2 "The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man."</p>
<p>4. Used blood of animals.</p> <p>Lev.16:15 " He shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and take its blood behind the curtain and do with it as he did with the bull's blood: He shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it.</p>	<p>4. Used blood of Christ.</p> <p>Hebrews 10:5 Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me.</p>
<p>5. Required many sacrifices</p> <p>Lev.22:19 "You must present a male without defect from the cattle, sheep or goats in order that it may be accepted on your behalf.</p>	<p>6. Requires one sacrifice.</p> <p>Heb.9:28 "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.</p>

<p>6.Required careful approach to the tabernacle.</p> <p>Lev.16:12. "The Lord said to Moses: Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover.</p>	<p>6.We are encouraged by a confident approach to the throne.</p> <p>Heb.4:16 "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.</p>
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● RECEIVING FORGIVENESS FOR PAST MISTAKES AND FORGIVING OTHERS FOR THEIR MISTAKES AND SINS, ARE TWO OF THE MOST IMPORTANT AND POWERFUL FACTORS IN HEALING OUR EMOTIONS AND DISCOVERING OUR FREEDOM IN CHRIST.

● SOULS ARE RESTORED BY GOD, THROUGH HIS FORGIVENESS!

Session II:" Follow the Leader"

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God 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 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 (Ephesians 4:32) 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?"

- We also see it in the Lord's Prayer-"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." As we come to understand God's mercy, however, we will want to be like Him. Having received forgiveness, we will pass it on to others.

- Those who are unwilling to forgive have not become one with Christ, who was willing to forgive even those who crucified Him.

" 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

THIS IS NOT EASY!

- 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.

III. "This is so Important "

- This bible study, "The Power of Forgiveness " is not a message that diminishes what you've been through or makes light of the anguish you've cried over. This study is not a message that justifies abuse or abandonment or affairs that are wrong no matter how it's flipped or framed by others. This is not a lesson that refuses to acknowledge how powerful feelings are and how powerless you can feel when you get flooded with pain, triggered by memories, ignored by those who were supposed to love you, or brushed aside by those who should have cared for you.

- This study isn't a lesson that demands you excuse the cruelest and most horrific crimes committed against you or those you love.

- Nor will it nod in the direction of forgiveness demanding all relationships work out with all people- sometimes that is neither possible nor safe.

- Forgiveness is possible, but it won't always feel possible.

- Forgiveness often feels like one of the most difficult instructions from the Lord.

- Our ability to forgive others rises and falls, instead we should lean into what Jesus has already done, which allows His grace for us to flow freely through us.

- Forgiveness is an act of determination, but it is only made possible by your cooperation with God.

- God knew that we couldn't do it on our own.

IV. "Legitimate Feelings Why Some Cannot Forgive"

- I fear the offense will be repeated.

- Hanging on to a grudge gives you a sense of control in a situation that's felt unfair.

- The pain you experienced altered your life, and yet no one has ever validated that what you went through was wrong.

- Forgiveness feels like it minimizes or worse yet, makes what happened, no big deal.

It is hard to forgive when you still feel hostile to the person who hurt you.

- You are not ready to forgive.
- You still feel hurt.
- The person hasn't apologized or even acknowledged that what they did was wrong.
- I'm still in the middle of a long, hard situation with no resolution yet.
- I'm afraid forgiveness will give them false hope that I want to reestablish the relationship, but I don't.
- It's easier to ignore this person altogether than to try and figure out boundaries, so they don't keep hurting me.
- What they did is unchangeable, therefore, forgiveness won't help anything.
- The person who hurt me is no longer here. I can't forgive someone, I can't talk to.
- I don't think any good will come from forgiveness now.

V. "How Should I Start?"

1. Acknowledge the pain. Forgiveness doesn't mean denying or minimizing the pain you've experienced. It's important to acknowledge and process your emotions, allowing yourself to grieve and heal.

2. Understand forgiveness. Forgiveness is a choice and a process. It doesn't mean condoning or forgetting what happened, but rather releasing the desire for revenge or holding onto resentment. It's about freeing yourself from the burden of carrying the hurt.

3. Practice self-compassion. Forgiving others often starts with showing compassion to yourself. Recognize that healing takes time and that it's okay to feel a range of emotions. Be patient and kind to yourself throughout the forgiveness journey.

4. Set boundaries. Forgiveness doesn't mean allowing the same hurtful behavior to continue. It's important to establish healthy boundaries to protect yourself and prevent further harm. Communicate your boundaries clearly and assertively.

5. Seek support-Forgiveness can be a challenging and complex process. It can be helpful to seek support from trusted friends, family or professionals' empathy and a safe space to process your emotions.

THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS

- 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.