

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

Women's Bible Study

October 12, 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 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

I. Scripture Background: 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

- In the ancient world, slaves could be redeemed, a price could be paid for their freedom...Redemption from sin comes through the price paid by Jesus Christ through His blood. Why blood? Because the judgment for sin is death.

" For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 6:23

- You are free to choose between two masters, but you are not free to manipulate the consequences of your choice. Each of the two matters plays with his own kind of currency (medium of exchange). The currency of sin is death. That is all you can expect or hope for in life without God. Christ's currency is eternal life-- new life with God that begins on earth and continues forever with God.

- Although we like to quote this scripture (Romans 6:23) to non-Christians, Paul is writing to Christians. Since believers can't lose their salvation, the payment of sin is always the same. Christians can lose their joy, because sin separates us from true fellowship with God. They can also lose out on the will of God. The point is that believers can still choose sin, but when they do, they collect their rightful wages: weakness, meaninglessness and guilt.

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

- Jesus asked God to forgive the people who were putting Him to death- Jewish leaders, Roman politicians and soldiers, bystanders- and God answered that prayer by opening up the way of salvation, even to Jesus' murderers. The Roman centurion and soldiers who witnessed the crucifixion said, "Surely He was the Son of God." Matthew 27:54

The Jewish religious leaders rejected Him, these Gentiles believed Jesus was exactly who he'd claimed to be.

- We are delivered from sin and all the "death" it brings with it. Worry, anxiety, and fear are forms of death. Strife, bitterness, resentment and unforgiveness are forms of death. The blood of Jesus is the only antidote for death.

- The blood of Jesus cleanses us from sin and will continuously cleanse us. His blood is like a powerful cleansing agent. Just as blood works to keep our bodies cleansed of all poison, the blood of Jesus continuously cleanses us from sin (all its forms and manifestation).

II. 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

- 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.

III. " 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

- When people gathered for the offering of sacrifices on the Day of Atonement, they were reminded of their sins, and they undoubtedly felt guilty all over again. What they needed most was forgiveness- the permanent, powerful sin destroying forgiveness we have from Christ. When we confess a sin to Him, we need never think of it again. Christ has forgiven us, and the sin no longer exists. (1 John 1:9)

- 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 only pointed to what Christ would do to take away sins.

- Christ came to offer His body on the cross for us as a sacrifice that is completely acceptable to God. God's new and living way for us to please Him is not by keeping laws or even by abstaining from sin. It is by coming to Him in faith to be forgiven, and then following Him in loving obedience.

- The costly sacrifice of an animal's life impressed upon the sinner the seriousness of his or her own sin before God. Because Jesus shed His own blood for us, His sacrifice is infinitely greater than any Old Testament offerings. Considering the immeasurable gift, He gave us, we should respond by giving Him our devotion and service.

IV. "Setting Aside the First."

- "Then He said, Here I am, I have come to do your will. He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy, through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again, and again he offers the same sacrifice which can never take away sins. But when This Priest had offered all time one sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God." Hebrews 10:9-12

- Setting aside the first system in order to establish a far better one meant doing away with the system of sacrifices contained in the ceremonial law. It didn't mean eliminating God's moral law (The Ten Commandments). The ceremonial law prepared people for Christ's coming. With Christ's death and resurrection, that system was no longer needed and through Christ we can fulfill the moral law as we let Him live in us.

- 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.

- If the Jewish readers of this book were to return to the Old Jewish system, they would be implying that Christ's sacrifice wasn't enough to forgive their sins. Adding anything to His sacrifice or taking anything from it denies its validity. Any system to gain salvation through good deeds is essentially rejecting the significance of Christ's death and rejecting the Holy Spirit's work.

- 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. When we believe in Christ, He makes us completely right with God. Our loving relationship leads us to follow Him in willing obedience and service. He is pleased with our service, but we cannot be saved by our good deeds.

V. "When It Is All Said and Done"

"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, yet 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.

VI. "You Are Forgiven"

" If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

- Confession is supposed to free us to enjoy fellowship with Christ, it should ease our consciences and lighten our cares. But some Christians do not understand how it works. They feel so guilty that they confess the same sins over and over; then they wonder if they might have forgotten something.

- Other Christians believe that God forgives them when they confess, but if they died with unconfessed sins, they would be forever lost. These Christians do not understand that God wants to forgive us. He allowed His beloved Son to die just so He could offer us pardon.

- When we come to Christ, He forgives all the sins we have committed or will ever commit. We don't need to confess the sins of the past all over again and we don't need to fear that God will reject us if we don't keep our slate perfectly clean.

- Of course, we should continue to confess our sins, but not because failure to do so will make us lose our salvation. Our relationship with Christ is secure. Instead, we should confess so we can enjoy maximum fellowship and joy with Christ.

- True confession also involves a commitment not to continue in sin. We wouldn't be genuinely confessing our sins to God, if we planned to

commit them again and just wanted temporary forgiveness. We should also pray for strength to defeat temptation the next time we face it.

- When we confess our sins to God, we are agreeing with what God's Word reveals to us. We are admitting that what the light exposes is not just a mistake, a bad habit, or a mere product of our upbringing. It's sin. This allows forgiveness and cleansing power.