

## The Power of Forgiveness

Colossians 3:12-17

### Preface

Illus: Going overboard with baseball in Petal.

Peter was like this. He was all-in for things. In Matt. 18:21, Peter asked a boastful question about forgiving 7 times. Jesus responds with  $7 \times 70 = 490$ .

Jesus was saying there is no limit and no keeping count, we are to forgive. Jesus goes on to explain through a parable that if we are to be forgiven by God, we must also forgive others.

### Scripture

*<sup>12</sup> Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. <sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

*<sup>15</sup> Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Colossians 3:12-17 (NIV)*

### Introduction

Illus: 30 years of marriage, forgiveness is the key. There will be arguments, bad words, etc. Must be able to forgive to grow past and heal.

Forgiveness is critical to any relationship.

Many people today are living in a painful and distorted world because of their failure to forgive.

### 1. Failure to forgive is tragic.

People get hurt in all sorts of relationships; marriage, parents, children, employment and even church. Some people can't move past the hurt because they refuse or do not know how to forgive.

If you fail to forgive, you are destined to live a life of anger and resentment; boiling inside you.

Illus: Imagine having your house burn down and then rebuilding it with the same charred lumber. That is the world people are living in when they do not forgive.

Failure to forgive will define who you are; what you talk about, what you think about. It will take over your life.

Events shape us but you can't afford to allow one tragedy define your life. Failure to forgive leaves us stuck in a moment in time.

#### False forms of forgiveness:

- a. Forgive but not forget
- b. Forgive but still stewing
- c. Forgive but waiting for moment of revenge
- d. Forgive but privately wish ill will on someone

When someone offends us, we begin demonizing them.

Without forgiveness, there will be no happiness.

Failure to forgive will choke out your ability to love freely others.

God gives us the ability to forgive and he gives us the example of forgiveness.

If we do not forgive, we are sacrificing our relationship with God.

But when we do forgive, we give someone back their dignity; literally and figurative in our mind.

#### Definition: "It no longer stands between us."

Illus: Thomas Edison forgave the boy who dropped the light bulb.

## 2. Forgiving ourselves brings freedom to worship.

Forgiveness is unnatural. We are not naturally inclined to forgive.

Illus: Some people appear to be angry at the world when it is really themselves that they are angry with. We all know people who think everyone is talking about them or “looking down on me”. The people they are referring to have no idea or never think about it. This is Satan’s way of destroying you from inside.

Sometimes the hardest person to forgive is yourself. God forgives us so we must learn to forgive ourselves as well.

We must learn to move past our sin. Yes there are consequences and shame but we must learn to move past it and forgive our self.

Proverbs 4:25 says, *“<sup>25</sup>Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you.”*

You cannot move on to tomorrow if you insist on being stuck in the past. You are depriving yourself of the joy of living in Christ.

Someone might say, “I can’t help the way I feel.” It isn’t about your feelings. God gives you the ability to forgive yourself just as He forgives you. God is eager to see you live for Him.

Through Christ, God says our sin no longer stands between us and Him. His forgiveness is complete; as far as the east from the west.

*<sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup> Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! <sup>10</sup> For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! <sup>11</sup> Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. Romans 5:8-11 NIV*

God forgives us, justifies us and reconciles us. Notice, we are saved through His life. We are to move on and live life for God.

## 3. Forgiving others brings freedom to live.

Many people in this world and in our churches are stuck on a certain day and time; the moment when someone hurt them.

In doing so, we destroy our ability to move forward in life. God calls us to forgive and yet we refuse. This leaves us spinning in the same miserable spot.

Illus: There are men and women who were wronged by their ex-spouse and they live every moment of their life anguishing over the pain and anger. They say they have forgiven but have not.

You might say that you cannot forgive. You can and you must if you are to have a full life. Practical ways to exercise forgiveness:

- a. Realize everyone is human and makes mistakes, even you.
- b. Consider that you may have contributed to what happened.
- c. Realize the people around you are tired of the story.
- d. Understand you are keeping the bad feelings alive.
- e. Know God has a tomorrow waiting for you to move on.
- f. Pray for the person who wronged you and do something nice.
- g. Acknowledge if God has forgiven so should you.

*<sup>14</sup> For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. <sup>15</sup> But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. Matthew 6:14-15 NIV*

If you have the love of Christ and truly experience God’s forgiveness then you will be compelled to forgive others. We have no right to refuse forgiveness.

There are people who had bad childhoods. You have been deprived of things. Pick up the pieces and make the best of it. You have the choice of two roads, one of resentment and withdrawal or one of making the best of what you have left.

Make the best cake you can with the ingredients you have.

Just because you had a bad start doesn’t mean you can’t have a great finish.

## Conclusion

Back in 1929, Georgia Tech played the University of California in the Rose Bowl. Just before halftime, a man named Roy Riegels recovered a fumble for California. Somehow, he became confused and he ran 65 yards in the wrong direction. A teammate tackled him at his own two yard line. When California attempted to punt, Georgia Tech blocked the punt and scored a safety.

The team headed off the field and went into the dressing room. As they sat on the benches, Riegels put a blanket on his shoulders, sat down in a corner, put his face in his hands and cried like a baby.

Right before the second half started, Coach Price said, "Men, the same team that played the first half will start the second." The players all got up and headed back to the field. Except for Roy Riegels. The coach called for Roy. But he didn't budge. So the coach said, "Did you hear me Roy? The same team starts the second half."

Riegels looked up and with tears in his eyes, he said, "Coach, I can't go back out there. I hurt the team. I'm so embarrassed. I can't go back out there and face the crowd."

Coach Price simply put his hand on Roy's shoulder and said, "Roy, the game is only half over. Get up and get back out there."

Roy Riegels went back and played the greatest game of his life in the second half.

Like Roy Riegels, some of you have been running in the wrong direction. You've made mistakes. You have regrets. But life is not over. God has got His arm around you and He is saying to you right now, "Get up and get on back out there! The game's only half over! What's in the past is in the past. I have great plans for you."

Illus: Thomas Edison was working on a crazy contraption called a "light bulb" and it took a whole team of men 24 straight hours to put just one together. The story goes that when Edison was finished with one light bulb, he gave it to a young boy helper, who nervously carried it up the stairs. Step by step he cautiously watched his hands, obviously frightened of dropping such a priceless piece of work. You've probably guessed what happened by now; the poor young fellow dropped the bulb at the top of the stairs. It took the entire team of men twenty-four more hours to make another bulb. Finally, tired and ready for a break, Edison was ready to have his bulb carried up the stairs. He gave it to the same young boy who dropped the first one. That's true forgiveness.