



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

Genesis Sermon Series

Supports Session 12: Reconcile

Sermon Title: “The Cost and Obligation of Forgiveness” (Matthew 18:21-35)

Connection to Session 12

Just as Joseph forgave his brothers, our Lord commands us to forgive those who wrong us.

Introduction/Opening

If you have ever listened to Dave Ramsey, you know he is adamantly opposed to debt. While I don't agree with him on every detail, I do understand his perspective. He knows what kind of bondage it can bring because he's been there. It's a terrible burden to owe a big debt when you have no way of repaying it.

In this text, Jesus told a parable about a man who owed a tremendous debt. He had no way of paying what he owed, so he and his family were about to be sold into slavery. He begged his creditor for mercy, and to his surprised delight, his creditor gave it! This man was shown tremendous mercy. And yet, when he tried to collect a much smaller debt from someone else, he refused to show his debtor any mercy. Jesus used this parable to teach about forgiveness. Like the man in his parable, you and I have been forgiven a great debt. That forgiveness came at a great cost: it cost God the life of His own Son. It also comes with a great obligation: we are obligated to forgive others as God forgave us.

Outline

1. The cost of forgiveness (vv. 21-27).

- a) Earlier in this passage, Jesus gave instruction on how to deal with someone who wronged you (vv. 15-17).
 - i. Paul instructed that you do it with a gentle spirit. Though harsh measures may be required, the goal is always restoration (Gal. 6:1).
- b) Peter asked how many times we should forgive someone.
 - i. “As many as seven times?”—Jewish rabbis in that day taught that you were only required to forgive someone three times, so Peter was being quite generous.
 - ii. Scholars disagree over whether Jesus said, “seventy-seven times” or “seventy times seven”. Either way, his point was the same: don't keep count.
- c) Jesus anticipated that someone would object to His command, so He reinforced His point by telling a parable.
 - i. A servant owed a king ten thousand talents, which was an astronomical amount of money.

- ii. The servant begged for more time to pay off the debt. This was an empty promise on his part, as he could not possibly pay it.
- iii. The king took pity on him and forgave the debt.
- d) Like the servant in the parable, we have been forgiven a tremendous debt.
 - i. We sinned against God, and we could never do enough good works to pay the penalty we deserve.
 - ii. God did not just forgive our debt. He paid it with the blood of His own Son.

2. The obligation of forgiveness (vv. 28-35).

- a) The servant found another servant who owed him a hundred denarii, which was a little more than three months' wages.
 - i. The second servant asked for time to repay the debt. Though it was not a small amount, it was certainly possible for him to pay it off.
 - ii. The first servant would have none of it, and he had the other servant thrown into debtors' prison.
 - iii. The inconsistency did not go unnoticed by the other servants (v. 31). Likewise, people will notice your hypocrisy if you refuse to forgive.
- b) When the king heard what had happened, he was not a bit pleased.
 - i. The servant obviously didn't appreciate the king's mercy to him, or he would have shown mercy to his fellow servant.
 - ii. The unforgiving servant was handed over to the jailers to be tortured until he could pay all he owed.
- c) Our Lord's lesson was obvious: we must forgive as we have been forgiven.
 - i. Jesus warned that if we don't forgive others, our heavenly Father will not forgive us (Matt. 6:14-15).
 - ii. If you have known the joy and the peace of being forgiven, how can you possibly not forgive others?

Conclusion

I know it can get tiresome to forgive people of the same sins over and over. Yet no matter how much someone has wronged me, their offenses pale in comparison to how I have wronged God. Forgiveness is always worth it, even when it's difficult. When you forgive others, you're released from the bondage of bitterness, and from the burden of your own sins. When you show grace to others, you have an even greater appreciation of the grace of God. It's not always easy to forgive, but it's worth the effort. "And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ" (Eph. 4:32).

Ken Jones has been pastor of Worsham Baptist Church in Farmville, Virginia, since 2007. He has a B.S. in History from the University of Tennessee at Martin, and an MDiv. from Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary. His wife, Celia, is an associate professor of Political Science at Hampden-Sydney College.

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