

FORGIVENESS AND TRUST

Genesis 42:25-36

I. INTRODUCTION-

- a. In our last lesson... Joseph's brothers had traveled to Egypt from Canaan to buy grain... so that their father Jacob... and their families... could survive the terrible famine that had grip that part of the world.
- b. When they arrived in Egypt they came before...the Prime Minister of Egypt... the second most powerful man in the world... to make their purchase.
- c. These men had no idea... that the man they were standing before and dealing with was actually their brother Joseph... whom they sold into slavery over 25 years earlier.
- d. While Joseph's brothers did not recognize him... he recognized them.
- e. Though the Bible does not tell us... you can't help but think that Joseph had often thought about what he would do... if he ever saw his brothers again.
- f. While Joseph was a good and godly man... he was also human ... and I am pretty sure that at times when Joseph thought about his brothers ... thoughts of revenge and getting even crossed his mind.
- g. Have you ever thought about what you would say or do... to someone who has hurt you... if you had the chance?
- h. Even for a Christian... it is hard not to think about how we would love to get even with those who have hurt us.
- i. But then we think about what the Bible says about forgiving those who hurt us... and we know...as hard as it may be... we have to find a way to forgive those who hurt us.

II. THE NECESSITY OF FORGIVENESS-

- a. Forgiveness... even for a Christian... even for those of us who have been forgiven by God... is not easy.
- b. God never said that forgiving others is easy... but finding a way to forgive those who hurt us is necessary for our own good.
- c. #1, Forgiving others is necessary... for our own spiritual good.
- d. I know that you and I have heard all those verses in the Bible... that say as Christians... we must forgive those who hurt us.
- e. *Matthew 6:14-15 "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."*
- f. This passage does not mean that if a believer fails to forgive someone that has hurt them... we will lose our salvation.
- g. But it does mean that if believers fail to forgive as we have been forgiven ...we will lose our fellowship with God... we will lose our usefulness in God's service...we will stymie our spiritual growth... our prayers will be hindered...and we will lose many blessings that God wants to give us.
- h. *Matthew 18:35 (NKJV) "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."*
- i. In this passage... and the parable that Jesus told before it... Jesus taught that believers who fail to forgive as they have been forgiven ... dishonor God and invite His chastening.
- j. *Colossians 3:12-13 (NKJV) "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if*

anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.”

- k. #2, Forgiving others... is necessary for our own physical well-being.
 - l. Medical studies have shown that an unforgiving, bitter, resentful spirit... has an effect on a person's physical health... contributing to things like high blood pressure... unhealthy heart conditions ... compromised immune systems... and more.
- m. #3, Forgiving others... is necessary for our mental well-being.
 - n. A bitter, unforgiving spirit has a tendency to dominate a person's thoughts... their mind... how they think...and what they think about.
 - o. An unforgiving spirit causes us to focus on ourselves... to become selfish and self-centered in our thinking.
 - p. An unforgiving spirit takes our minds and thoughts off of God... and His goodness and grace.
- q. #4, Forgiving others...is necessary for maintain healthy relationships.
 - r. It is hard for those who harbor resentment, bitterness and unforgiveness ... to contain and keep a lid on their feelings.
 - s. An unforgiving spirit will affect how a person relates to and communicates with others... with their family... friends ... and with those with whom they have no issue.
- t. #5, Forgiving others... is necessary to maintain our Christian witness.
 - u. Having an unforgiving spirit will cause a believer to lose respect in the church... and it will hurt their witness in the world.
 - v. In the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant that is found in Matthew 18 ... Jesus said that when the servants witnessed the spiteful and unforgiving actions of their fellow servant... “they were very grieved, and they went and told their master all that had been done.”

- w. It is kind of hard to tell someone who is lost about a God who will forgive sins ... when we who claim to be forgiven by God of our own great and massive sin debt ... refuse to forgive others of their debts against us... which are meager in comparison to all that we have been forgiven of.
- x. On the other hand... nothing will enhance and strengthen the witness of a believer more in this world... than their willingness to offer Christ-like forgiveness to those who have hurt them.

III. THE DECISION TO FORGIVE-

- a. So... how do we forgive others as we have been commanded?
- b. Forgiveness is not an emotion... forgiveness is a decision.
- c. The first step in forgiving someone for the wrong and hurt they have done to us... is to make a decision to forgive them... whether the one who has hurt us admits their wrong and seeks our forgiveness or not.
- d. The believer's decision to forgive another person...is based on the many commands in the Bible that tell us that we are to forgive others.
- e. Our decision to forgive is based on the great forgiveness... we have received from God.
- f. Our decision to forgive is based on our understanding that Satan will use our unforgiving spirit... to harm ourselves... to hurt others ...and to hurt our witness in the church and in the world.
- g. Our decision to forgive... is based on our understanding that the opportunity to forgive... is an opportunity to demonstrate the power of God's love and grace in a very real and tangible way.
- h. Our decision to forgive will cost us... God's decision to provide a way to make the forgiveness of our sins and our salvation possible cost Him dearly... it cost the death of His Son on the cross.

- i. Our decision to forgive those who have hurt us will bless us and benefit us... but it will also cost us ... we will have to put aside our desire for pay back... for revenge... to get even.
- j. But the earthly and eternal blessings and benefits of forgiving others ... will always far outweigh the cost of forgiving others.
- k. Forgiving others... is a decision we have to make.
- l. Forgiving someone does not mean that you forget what someone has done to you... it is impossible for us to mentally erase and forget the harm that someone has done to us.
- m. Forgiving someone means that you decide that you will no longer hold the harm that someone has done to you... against them.
- n. You decide to lay the hurt that someone has done to you aside ... and with God's help... you decide that you are going to love them as God has commanded.
- o. *Matthew 5:44-45 (NKJV) "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."*
- p. Nothing will challenge and test your faith in Christ more... and your Christian witness more... than the challenge of forgiving and loving those who have acted as an enemy against you.
- q. How do we do that?... we decide to forgive... and we pray... and we pray... and we pray... and we pray... we ask... we seek... we knock ... until God helps us to forgive.

IV. FORGIVENESS AND TRUST-

- a. Some years ago... as Pastor I know was asked to mediate a conflict that had occurred between a grown child and the child's parents.

- b. The child...a young man... had a problem with drugs... his parents had tried and tried to help him... but under the influence of his drug habit ... the son had stolen from his parents and had done some pretty terrible things to them... he had hurt them a great deal.
- c. But like the Prodigal Son... the boy had come to the end of himself... he desperately wanted to get clean... and he wanted to get right with God and his parents.
- d. With tears in his eyes... this son sought his parent's forgiveness... and through tears of his own... his father told him this... "Son, I forgive you ... and I will do everything I can do to help you... but I want you to know that right now I don't trust you as far as I can throw you ... I love you, I forgive you, and I want to trust you ... but you will have to earn my trust."
- e. The son said that he would do what he had to do to earn the trust of his parents... and happily... he did so.
- f. Joseph had decided that if he ever saw his brothers... he would get even with them by forgiving them.
- g. But even though Joseph forgave his brothers... he did not trust them as far as he could throw them.
- h. Joseph was not just playing with his brothers by doing what he did to them... keeping one of them in prison... sending the rest of them home ... putting the money they had used to buy grain back in their sacks... demanding that they bring Benjamin... his full brother back to Egypt before he would let Simeon out of jail.
- i. Joseph was testing his brothers to see if they had changed... were they same men that sold him into slavery?... was his brother Benjamin okay or had they done to Benjamin what they had done to him? ... was his father Jacob okay or had his wild brothers driven him to the grave?

- j. Joseph forgave his brothers... but they were going to have to earn his trust.
- k. If forgiveness is the responsibility of the one who has been offended ... then restoring trust in a relationship is the responsibility of the one who did the offending.
- l. Trust is the currency of any relationship... no one can really have a relationship with a person they don't trust.
- m. The person who has the heart and desire to forgive... will also have the heart and desire to trust the one they have forgiven.
- n. And if a person really wants to be forgiven and restored... they will seek forgiveness... and they will do all they can to earn and regain the trust of the one they have offended.
- o. It is a sweet and good thing...when forgiveness and trust meet and a relationship is fully restored.

V. CONCLUSION-

- a. Next week the story of Joseph continues... with the great reveal.
- b. Thank God for His forgiveness.
- c. God will help us to forgive... as we have been forgiven.
- d. Seeking forgiveness when we have wronged someone... is just as important as giving forgiveness to those who have wronged us.