

“The Sweet Fragrance of Forgiveness”

(Luke 11:4)

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I. Introduction

A. Joseph and his rotten brothers (Genesis 50)

1. They hated him
 - a. Jealous
 - b. Sold him as a slave rather than kill him
 - c. Never thought they'd have to face him again
 - d. Joseph's rise to power in Egypt
 - e. The famine and trip to Egypt
2. The reunion
 - a. The tables were turned
 - b. How would you have responded if you were Joseph?
 1. Years of anger and bitterness?
 2. Couldn't wait for that day?
 3. “I don't get mad...I get even”
3. Joseph has long ago given it over to God
 - a. He had “moved on”
 - b. He took good care of his brothers
 - c. He forgave them unconditionally
4. But then their father Jacob was dying... (Genesis 50:15)

(15) When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?"

- a. Was Joseph waiting for the old man to die to "get even?"
- b. Was his forgiveness for real?

5. Then dad died...

(16) So the brothers sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: (17) 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father."

When their message came to him, Joseph wept. (18) His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves they said."

- a. They all underestimated the character of Joseph

6. Joseph's humble forgiveness

(19) But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? (20) You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. (21) So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

7. His forgiveness was real...and total...and kind

B. The liberating fragrance of genuine forgiving

1. Some of you have been hurt very badly

- a. Feel like you've been stomped on
- b. Can't let go

2. Who do you need to forgive?

- a. Someone has hurt you
- b. Always eating at you
- c. Carrying a grudge can be exhausting

3. A little boy, being asked what forgiveness is, gave this beautiful answer:

“It is the fragrance given off by flowers when they are trampled upon.”

4. Some of you have been trampled on
 - a. Time for the sweet fragrance of forgiveness
5. Give it over to God
 - a. Joseph.... “Am I God?”
 - b. Peace

II. Review

A. The Lord’s Prayer

1. Luke 11 and Matthew 6:9-13
2. Will put into sets

B. Outline: (John MacArthur’s)

- | | | |
|---------------------------|----|---|
| 1. God’s Paternity | -- | Our Father in heaven |
| 2. God’s Priority | -- | Hallowed be your name |
| 3. God’s Program | -- | Your kingdom come |
| 4. God’s Plan | -- | Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven |
| 5. God’s Provision | -- | Give us this day our daily bread |

***today

- | | | |
|------------------------|----|---|
| 6. God’s Pardon | -- | And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors |
|------------------------|----|---|

***in two weeks

- | | | |
|----------------------------|----|---|
| 7. God’s Protection | -- | And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one |
|----------------------------|----|---|

8. **God's Preeminence** -- For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen

III. Text...Matthew 6

A. Be careful what you pray for (Matthew 6:12)

(12) Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors

***and just so there's no misunderstanding

(14) For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. (15) But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

1. WAIT A MINUTE!

a. Aren't we forgiven once and for all of all our sins?

b. Literally – "*as you have already forgiven others*"

2. Isn't grace "unconditional" forgiveness?

a. Aren't we presented to God through Jesus as spotless and white, without blemish, etc.?

3. The answer is, of course, *YES!*

B. Positional Forgiveness...Salvation

1. God says you're clean

a. Hebrews 8:12

(12) For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.

b. Romans 8:1

(1) Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus

c. Ephesians 5:25-27

(25) Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (26) to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, (27) and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless

2. But the Lord's Prayer is talking about something else

a. Dr. Harry Ironside, regarding these verses

Our forgiveness of daily offenses depends upon our attitude toward those who offend against us. If we refuse to forgive our erring brethren, God will not grant us that restorative forgiveness for which we plead when conscious of sin and failure. This, of course, has nothing to do with that eternal forgiveness which the believing sinner receives when he comes to Christ. It is the Father's forgiveness of an erring child, which must of necessity take into account the attitude of the failed one toward other members of the family.

b. A dad and his disobedient children

1. Loss of privileges and peace

C. Conditional Forgiveness

1. Oswald Sanders

Jesus is here stating a principle in God's dealing with His children. He deals with us as we deal with others. He measures us by the yardstick we use on others. The prayer is not "forgive us because we forgive others," but "forgive us as we have already forgiven others."

2. Need for daily confession and forgiveness

a. I John 1:8-9

(8) If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. (9) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness

b. James 5:16

(16) Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

D. Unconfessed sins will cost you

1. *Eternal rewards*

a. I Corinthians 3:12-15

(12) If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, (13) his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. (14) If what he has

built survives, he will receive his reward. (15) If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; (yet) he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

- b. I suspect that refusing to forgive will cost you eternal rewards

2. Earthly blessings

- a. Loss of privileges
- b. Loss of peace
- c. Loss of fruit
- d. Accountable for your daily sins
- e. Restricted fellowship with God
- f. Stunted spiritual growth
- g. Hindered prayers
- h. Failing health
 - 1. Taking of communion with unconfessed sin
 - 2. I Corinthians 11

- 3. Carrying a grudge is exhausting work

E. How often must we forgive? (Matthew 18:21-22)

(21) 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?”

- 1. Right after teaching on restoration and church discipline
 - a. Logical question
 - b. “How many times do we have to forgive these guys?”
- 2. We grapple with same issue today
 - a. When a child repents
 - b. Is there a limit before the church says “no more”?

3. Peter probably expected to be congratulated (vs. 21-22)
 - a. Rabbi's taught to forgive 3 times
 - b. Peter was willing to go 7 times
4. We live in an unforgiving world
 - a. Louis XII— *"Nothing smells so sweet as the dead body of your enemy"*
 - b. Baseball and the "bean ball"
 1. Waiting to return the hit
5. So, how many times must we forgive? (Matthew 18:22)

(22) Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."

- a. "Seventy times" (NKJV...seventy times seven)
- b. 490 times
- c. An unlimited number of times
 1. Don't keep track of the times—"that's 491—you're out!"
- d. Luke 17:3-4

(3) So watch yourselves. "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. (4) If he sins against you seven times in a day, and says 'I repent,' forgive him."

- e. No limit!
 - f. No matter how rotten they are
6. Just like God forgives us
 7. Repentance vs. no repentance

E. Jesus then gives them an illustration

1. Matthew 18:23-27

(23) Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. (24) As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. (25) Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. (26) The servant fell on his knees before him. “Be patient with me,” he begged, “and I will pay back everything.” (27) The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

- a. 10,000 talents
 - 1. Around a quarter of a billion dollars
- b. He systematically stole it
- c. He also squandered it all
- d. “I’ll pay it all back”
 - 1. No way
- e. The King forgave a debt the servant could not pay

2. Matthew 18:28-35

(28) But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. “Pay back what you owed me!” he demanded. (29) His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, “Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.” (30) But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.

(31) When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. (32) Then the master called the servant in. “You wicked servant,” he said, “I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. (33) Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?”

(34) In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. (35) This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.

- a. Key...God is serious about us forgiving
- b. How he forgave you

3. Thomas Manton

“There is none so tender to others as they which have received mercy themselves, for they know how gently God has dealt with them”

4. Why so important to God?
 - a. Heart and soul of salvation
 - b. He has set the example
5. George Herbert

“He who cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass”

F. How God forgave you

Ephesians 4:32

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

1. Compassionately

- a. Romans 5:8

(8) But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

- b. From the heart of God
- c. Henry Ward Beecher

“God pardons like a mother, who kisses the offense into everlasting forgiveness”

2. Constantly

- a. God never tires of forgiving us
 1. That’s good!
- b. We sin after salvation
- c. God stands waiting to forgive and so must you!

3. Completely

- a. Hebrews 8:12

“For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

- b. Confessed—forgiven—forgotten
 - 1. Covers even the worst sins
- c. After confession
 - 1. Still haunted
 - 2. Not by God!
 - a. Satan's the great imposter
 - 3. To take away your peace

G. The Fringe Benefits of Forgiveness

1. Joy

- a. No longer burdened by the weight of a grudge
- b. Joy can't exist with bitterness
- c. Don't let others ruin your attitude
- d. Determine to remain joyous
- e. Despite the offenses of...
 - 1. Spouse
 - 2. Parents
 - 3. Boss
 - 4. Church
 - 5. Neighbors

2. Peace

- a. The greatest gain
 - 1. Peace with God
 - 2. Peace with People

b. Peace with God

1. Paul's letters open with "grace and peace"
2. Colossians 1:2

"Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Colossians 1:19-20

(19) For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in Jesus, (20) and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

c. With others

1. Colossians 3:15

(15) Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.

2. Hebrew 12:14-15

(14) Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. (15) See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

d. Henry Ward Beecher

"I can forgive, but I cannot forget," is only another way of saying, "I cannot forgive."

e. Ralph Waldo Emerson said of Abraham Lincoln:

"His heart was as great as the world, but there was no room in it for the memory of a wrong."

f. Spurgeon gives this advice:

"Cultivate forbearance till your heart yields a fine crop of it. Pray for a short memory as to unkindness."

3. Forgiveness

- a. God will restore your privileges

4. Freedom

- a. From guilt
- b. From dragging a grudge around with you

III. Summary

A. Time to do a “grudge audit”

1. Your brothers and sisters?
2. Your ex-husband or ex-wife?
 - a. Your current husband or wife
3. Somebody who cheated you out of some money?
 - a. Former friend
4. Somebody that spread a rumor?
 - a. Refuse to talk to them
5. Your parents?
 - a. Cruel words
 - b. Non-supportive

B. Time to get the “grudge off the books”

1. Only you are suffering
2. Costing you peace and privilege

C. Remember the debt you owed

1. You owed the 10,000 talents
 - a. A debt you could not pay
2. It took amazing love to forgive us

Closing song, “You are my King”

*I'm forgiven, because you were forsaken
I'm accepted, you were condemned
I'm alive and well, your spirit lives within me
Because you died and rose again*

*Amazing love, how can it be, that you my king would die for me
Amazing love, I know it's true, and it's my joy to honor you.*