

**Sermon Notes, September 17, 2017 The Christian Lifestyle: Forgiving & Forgiven
Matthew 18:21-35, 1 Corinthians 13:4-5, Ephesians 4:32**

At the beginning of 1 Corinthians 13 it tells us we must remember that morally virtuous behavior can arise out of a heart filled with deep spiritual emptiness. The heart motive for that, the force for that, the dynamic for that, can be one of self-centeredness, self-absorption, self-interest, self-righteousness. See, morally virtuous behavior can arise out of a heart that hasn't actually been changed, that hasn't really been supernaturally changed.

Therefore, in traditional moral training, you've only *restrained the heart*, not fundamentally *changed the heart*. You haven't changed its character. Therefore, it's only an experience of grace of God through Jesus Christ that changes the heart rather than restrains the heart. Each week we're not, therefore, going to be looking at a list of commands. We're looking at the marks of a supernaturally changed heart. We're looking at the Christian lifestyle and how that is cultivated in Christ, and then out of that how you respond to this list of commands. Following this list does not make you a Christian. You become a Christian and then you live into these commands.

Now you know the first one. Paul makes a list of these marks of a supernaturally changed heart. He says, "Love ..." And the very first one is patient.

1. Why do we need patience?

At the heart of the parable on forgiveness (which starts in v. 23 that Jesus tells) is this word *patience*. It's right in the heart of it. If we want to understand what forgiveness is, we need to see what patience is, then we have to understand the parable. The exegetical key, as it were, is the magnitude of the debt. In spite of the fact that this servant has removed all this money and in spite of the fact this servant has basically put his very kingship into jeopardy, one thing the servant has not taken away is the man's inner composure, because the servant looks up at him and says, "Be patient." And the king forgives him.

What's going on here? What does this word *patient* mean? It's a Greek word. It's a compound word. It's the word *makrothymeo*. It literally means to be long-tempered, long temperate, as opposed to *short-tempered*. The word *thymeo* has to do with a *boiling feeling*. Therefore, *makrothymeo*, which is saying *long temperate*, means spiritual patience, the mark of patience, (what does Paul say? Love is patient), is the inner power to bear injuries without meltdown.

As Christians, (remember you've been changed, you have the Spirit, you have put on the new self), you are now different, and not made and controlled and affected and shaped by what is being done to you. Heat comes on, but you do not melt down. It's a way of freedom. In a life, in a world, in which suffering is basically a law of life, there is no more important trait than the ability to be long-suffering, to have a certain kind of spiritual patience.

2. What is patience?

What is the forgiving spirit? There are three things the king does to the servant that we can learn from. Three things you have to do when you're wronged, when you're snubbed, when you're hurt. Notice what the king does to the servant. It says the servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt, and let him go. Let's look at those, but not in that order.

1) The first thing is he canceled the debt.

The first step, the first aspect of a forgiving spirit, is you do not take revenge and you do not make the other person pay the emotional debt of pain, but you pay it down yourself.

The premise of this point is, when someone wrongs you, it creates an emotional debt of pain. It's a debt. The debt you feel. A sense of obligation that this person owes you. You feel it. It's a debt essentially of emotional pain, and it has to be paid down.

Do you know what most people do? They make the other person pay. There are all sorts of direct ways to make people pay. There are more indirect ways to make people pay. We never ever want to admit it, but when we make the other person pay the debt, we are becoming like the evil that was done to us.

- It's passing into us.
- It's hardening us.

- It's creating self-pity.
- It's producing bitterness and unforgiveness.
- It's passing down. It's rooting itself in you.

The one thing you can do with a debt is you can make them pay for it. It works ... sort of, but it will change you.

As we close let me say that the point that Jesus is making in this parable is that our sin against God and our sin against others has incurred an incalculable, seemingly uncancelable debt. There's no way this servant could repay God, who, we are to understand in this parable, is the king. This man was in a hopeless situation. He couldn't pay it back. Unless we understand that the incalculable debt between us and God has been canceled, and we catch the outrageous magnitude of what is being conveyed by Jesus in this parable, we will never be able to forgive as God would have us forgive, until we understand our debt that has been canceled between the God and ourselves in Jesus Christ. God has forgiven us at the deepest level of our need.

Paul tells us this in Colossians 2:13-14! "When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross."