

**Sermon Notes, September 24, 2017 “The Christian Lifestyle: Forgiving & Forgiven Pt. 2”  
Matthew 18:21-35; 1 Corinthians 13:1-4; Ephesians 4:32**

We’re looking at forgiveness. It’s essential to recap last week otherwise you’ll be lost. There a couple of important reasons we read out of 1 Cor. 13. At the beginning of chapter 13 Paul tells us that morally virtuous behavior can arise out of a heart filled with deep spiritual emptiness. Morally virtuous behavior, even spiritual behavior, can arise out of a heart that hasn’t actually been changed, that hasn’t really been supernaturally changed.

This changed heart, and the importance of it, is explicitly expressed by Paul in Eph. 4. In the first part of Eph. 4, Paul says because we are members of the church, everything about us must be different. When you become part of the church, you actually are becoming part of Christ himself. You are partaking the divine nature. The Holy Spirit comes into your life. In Christ, and through the gospel, you have been transformed to walk in a newness of life. It is out of that that 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.

Here in 1 Cor. he gives us the first mark of a supernaturally changed heart. He says, “Love ...” And the very first one is patient. Why is patience necessary to forgiveness? Why do we need patience? What is it? How do we get it?

1. Why do we need patience?

At the heart of the parable on forgiveness is this word *patience*. If we want to understand what forgiveness is, we need to see what patience is, then we have to understand the parable. Of course, the exegetical key is the magnitude of the debt. This servant has basically put the king’s very kingship into jeopardy, yet he looks up at the king says, “Be patient.” And the king forgives him.

What does this word *patient* mean? In the Greek it’s a compound word. It’s the word *makrothymeo*. The old English translation of this word was much better. It was always long-suffering. The word *makro*—which does mean *long ... makrothymeo* means literally to be long-tempered, long temperate, as opposed to *short-tempered*. Therefore, *makrothymeo* is the inner power to bear injuries without meltdown. There’s a kind of patience that we’re looking at and that is the inner power to bear injuries from other people, to bear mistreatment and abuse and snubbing of other people without melting down into resentment and anger.

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 hurt. Notice what the king does. It says the king took pity on the servant, canceled the debt, and let him go. We’re looking at those 3 things, but not quite in that order.

A. 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.

But let’s be completely honest, when I inflict pain on somebody who hurts me, it makes me feel better. I’m exacting payment for the debt. I have to get my pain debt down by seeing them pay but now this is passing into you. The heat has come on, and it has passed into you. It has swept you along. It has melted you into its likeness. If you make the other person pay the debt, you are changing. It is controlling 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.

The other thing you can do is pay it down yourself, absorb it yourself.

Did you notice when the king canceled the debt, it didn’t go off into thin air? He absorbed it. He ate it. It’s going to be hard but *you* pay it down. Every time you want to make the other person pay but you don’t, it hurts. What are you doing? Why does it hurt so much? It’s costly not to take revenge. *You* are making the payments. *You* are paying it, but you’re paying it down.

There's no doubt that the emotional debt of pain goes away if you make them pay. Eventually you feel better, but you have been twisted. You have been warped. You have been hardened by the evil that was done to you. You have been misshapen.

On the other hand, if you refuse to bring the matter up to the other people and refuse to run them down and refuse to put little pins in them in your mind and all that sort of thing, if you refuse to do revenge of any sort, what's intriguing is, in spite of the fact that it hurts, slowly (because you're not putting fuel on your anger) the anger will be going out. You possess your soul. Remember Luke 21:19, in the old KJV it says, "In your patience possess ye your souls." You're a free woman or man because you've forgiven. You take your life back, to possess your souls in patience.

B. Secondly, very important. He was *moved to pity*.

Now what a shame. This is such a *wimpy* English word for a great Greek word. The great Greek word means to be moved with compassion for someone else's misery. Now, if you want to have the inner power to bear injuries without meltdown, what you have to do is, in your mind, you have to make a conscious decision to stress the *commonalties* between you and that person, not the *differences*. You have to rediscover their common humanity. You have to say, "I am a weak person. This is a weak person. I am fallible. I am weak. I am confused. I'm a mixture of good and evil. So is this person. This person sins, so do I."

If you do that, you'll get your freedom. Then you'll be free to do the third thing.

C. Then thirdly, it says he *let him go*.

We right away say, "Why would he let him go? Doesn't this guy not care about justice and truth, and didn't this guy do wrong?" Because the king, being an extremely gracious and charitable man, lets him go. *He deals with the personal debt*. Now, what's interesting is this first servant goes out and he does not simply say to the second servant, "Pay up." This is almost ludicrous. He chokes him! "You owe me \$25!" Here's a man whose life has just been given back to him, and what do we see? What does the king see? What do the other servants see? This is an oppressive, unjust, unfair and harsh man.

Now that the king has forgiven him about the personal debt, but into prison he goes because of the legal debt. Many people have said to me over the years, "I don't want to forgive; I want justice." Never pit those two things against each other, because I'll tell you something. If you don't first personally forgive, you'll never get justice. I want you to know if you haven't really deeply forgiven in, and from, your heart, if you haven't put on the new self so that you know how to deal with your anger, if you haven't gotten that forgiving spirit, you won't really be after justice.

3. How are we going to do this?

How are we *ever* going to do this? Once you know the magnitude of the debt, the average listener is looking at that and saying, "This is impossible. There isn't anybody like that. Nobody could do anything like that. That's ridiculous." But Jesus is pointing beyond this king to Somebody else. Jesus Christ is showing us in a mirror what we're all like when we stay angry with people. Every one of us is like that. We're all like a servant acting like a king. *What's the solution?*

We have to behold the King who became a servant. The ultimate King, Jesus Christ, looked down on us not just knowing that we *might* cost him his glory and power, but that we *would* cost him his glory and power. He came to earth, and he died on the cross. The last thing he said before he died was, "Tetelestai," in John's gospel, which is always translated, "It is finished." Do you know what it really means literally in the Greek? "It's paid." Look at what Jesus has done for you. He didn't make you pay a bit. There's a debt.

If you say, "Oh, look at all he has done," you'll have never been long-suffering unless you see him suffering, macro suffering for you, cosmic suffering for you. You'll never be able to pay what other people have done to you unless you see him paying the infinite debt. You'll never be able to pay the little debts off that other people have to you unless you see the infinite debt. If you see Jesus paying the infinite debt for you and you see that because of that you're utterly loved, you can be patient. Then you'll be free.