

## The Gift of Forgiveness – Col 3:13

**Introduction** – Last Sunday, we considered how unbelievable, personal, and deep the forgiveness of God for sinners is (1 Cor 2:6-9, Heb 10:15-18). We saw that Jesus came, as His name declares, to save His people from their sins. God's gift to us is not only that He is saving us from the just wrath due to us because of our sinfulness, but that He is saving us from our sinfulness, creating in us a new man in Christ. One of the chief sins He is saving us from is the sin of not forgiving one another from the heart in the way that Christ has forgiven us.

**Forgiveness at the Heart of the Gospel** – It is so important to remember that God only commands what He gives. So He commands that we love, and the fruit of the Spirit is love. He commands that we rejoice in Him always, and the fruit of the Spirit is joy – and so forth. He commands that we forgive one another, and the fruit of the Spirit is longsuffering, which is a precursor to being able to forgive others from the heart. This is gospel and is connected to the gospel of forgiveness: God exalted Jesus to give repentance and forgiveness of sin (Acts 5:31). Through Jesus, the forgiveness of sins is preached (Acts 13:38). God promises to open eyes in the preaching of the gospel, *"that they may receive forgiveness of sins..."* (Acts 26:18). The redemption through His blood is the forgiveness of sins (Eph 1:7).

**No Bait and Switch** – Forgiveness of sins was not declared, but now you must forgive – or else! If that is the message you hear, then you haven't heard the message of forgiveness – or it hasn't settled down into your bones. An unforgiving soul is an imprisoned soul, subject to the tortures of bitterness and discontent. Jesus came to forgive you for these sins as well, and to deliver you from this prison. The thing to note is this: when someone says they cannot forgive another from the heart because there is no forgiveness in his or her heart, who is the one who needs to be forgiven?

**What Kind of Forgiveness** (Col 3:13) - *"...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."* Our tendency is to receive forgiveness standing under the Niagara Falls of grace, and extend forgiveness, with tight-fisted hands, scrupulously checking to see if "he really meant it," and reluctantly giving a tea spoon of the stuff. Jesus built this problem into the Lord's Prayer (Matt 6:12, 14-15) which therefore doubles as a great tool for personal discipleship. We want to be eager to extend forgiveness and/or eager to learn how to extend forgiveness more and more.

**Even As Christ Forgave You** - It means that, when forgiveness is sought, Christ grants it immediately, and so we should do the same. Jesus came to seek the sick, not the healthy. He came to forgive sinners, not the righteous. He was looking to extend forgiveness, not looking to see if He could find it in His heart to forgive. *"even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do."*

Christ forgives our sins fully and completely, no matter how wicked the sin was. Trespasses against us are always much smaller in ratio than our trespasses against the infinite, perfect, holy God of heaven. *"even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do."*

Christ does not put us in a state of probation or purgatory. Christ does not put us in a period of testing to see if we really mean it. He restores us each time we confess our sins to full fellowship with Him. *"even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do."*

Christ does not stop forgiving us, even when we sin again and again. How many times have you been forgiven for the same sin? *"even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do."*

**A Forgiven People Overflowing with Forgiveness** – Love (and forgiveness) covers a multitude of sins (1 Pet 4:8). A people who meditate upon the lavish grace bestowed upon them become a certain kind of people. Jesus made clear that he who is forgiven much loves much (Luke 7:47).

There is a time when love and forgiveness confront one who has offended (Matt 18:15-19). These verses are used to teach about the steps in dealing with an unrepentant sinner and church discipline. But note that first, it follows the Parable of the Lost Sheep (Matt 18:10-14), and Jesus is continuing His teaching in verse 15, "Moreover..." The pursuit is for the sake of the other person and not for one's own sake. The pursuit must be done by one who is qualified (Gal 6:1). If you do not have this state of mind, if you do not have a blessed disposition when you approach one who has offended you, then you should not expect your actions or corrections to have the power and blessing of God.

Second, note that the passage is immediately followed by the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (vv21-35). The unmerciful servant, therefore, is the one who was sinned against but is not using vv10-14 in the spirit in which it was given. The Lord is concerned with the attitude of this man's heart – *"you should have had compassion"* (v33).

**The Christmas Gift of Forgiveness** – "But I can't," someone says, "what should I do?" *"What makes me merciful is the grace of God. But the grace of God does make me merciful. If I am not merciful, there is only one explanation; I have never understood the mercy of God, I am outside of Christ. I am in my sins, unforgiven."* D. Martin Lloyd-Jones. According to Col 3:13, you are in sin, a sin which must be confessed and repented of. And Jesus came to save you from your sins and give you forgiveness and grant you repentance from your sin. You need Jesus – and Merry Christmas.