



"CHOOSING FORGIVENESS OVER BITTERNESS"

EPHESIANS 4:32

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Introduction: Being wronged by another person is a common experience of everyone who has ever lived. While we cannot control what other people do to us, we can control how we respond to the inevitable offenses that others commit against us. Today we are going to discover both how and why we should choose forgiveness over bitterness.

I. **Life's Most Important Choice: Bitterness or Forgiveness** (Hebrews 12:15)

A. **Bitterness Defined**

Definition of bitterness: Bitterness is an attitude that refuses to **forgive** offenses.

Hebrews 12:15 "See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled."

B. **Forgiveness Defined**

Definition of forgiveness: Forgiveness is an attitude choice that honestly acknowledges an **offense** and then **releases** it on the basis of God's forgiveness of us.

II. **Forgiveness Illustrated** (Matthew 18:21-25)

A. **The Context of the Parable** (Matthew 18:21-22)

Matthew 18:21 "Then Peter came and said to Him, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?'"

Matthew 18:22 "Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.'"



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B. The Parable of the Two Debtors (Matthew 18:23-35)

Matthew 18:23-35 ²³ “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a certain king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴ And when he had begun to settle them, there was brought to him one who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵ But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. ²⁶ The slave therefore falling down, prostrated himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will repay you everything.’ ²⁷ And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ ²⁹ So his fellow slave fell down and began to entreat him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you.’ ³⁰ He was unwilling however, but went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. ³¹ So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. ³² Then summoning him, his lord said to him, ‘You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you entreated me. ³³ Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, even as I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴ And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. ³⁵ So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.”

III. The Biblical Basis For Forgiveness (Ephesians 4:32; Romans 5:1, 6, 8)

Ephesians 4:32 “And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

Romans 5:1, 6, 8 ¹ “Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁶ For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

A. God Forgave Us When We Did Not Deserve Forgiveness

Matthew 9:12 “But when He [Jesus] heard this, He said, ‘It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick.’”

Romans 3:10 “There is none righteous, not even one.”



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B. God Forgave Us On the Basis of Grace, Not Works

Romans 4:4-5 ⁴ "Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due. ⁵ But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness."

IV. The Problems With "Conditional" Forgiveness

A. Conditional Forgiveness Misinterprets Scripture (Luke 17:3-4; Mark 11:25-26)

Matthew 18:15-17 ¹⁵ "If your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. ¹⁶ But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. ¹⁷ And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer."

Luke 17:3-4 ³ "Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. ⁴ And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him."

Mark 11:25-26 ²⁵ "And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions. ²⁶ But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions."

B. Conditional Forgiveness Makes Us a Prisoner of Our Offender

V. A Case Study In Forgiveness

Genesis 50:20 "And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive."

A. Acknowledge You Have Been Wronged (Genesis 50:20a)

Genesis 50:20a "And as for you, you meant evil against me."



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Six Categories of People Who Need Our Forgiveness

Parents
Yourself
Spouse
Authority Figures
Others
God

B. View Your Hurt From God's Perspective (Romans 8:28-29; Genesis 50:20)

Romans 8:28 "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

Romans 8:29 "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren."

Hebrews 5:8 "Although He [Jesus] was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered."

Genesis 50:20 "And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive."

C. Acknowledge Your Failures and Receive God's Forgiveness (Ephesians 4:32)

Ephesians 4:32 "And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

D. Choose Forgiveness Over Bitterness (Matthew 18:34-35; Matthew 6:14-15)

Matthew 18:34-35 ³⁴ "And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. ³⁵ So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."

Matthew 6:14-15 ¹⁴ "For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions."