

Do I Gotta Forgive to be Forgiven?

Barry

In the model prayer Jesus says to forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors. How important it is it for Christians to forgive? Could our salvation be affected by the fact that we're not forgiving others?

INTRO

John

You know, it's interesting Jesus has something to say about this following that model prayer. In Matthew 6:14-15 Jesus emphasizes this aspect. He talks about forgiveness. And he says, "For if you forgive men their trespasses Your heavenly father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses."

You know, it's interesting that Jesus focuses on this concept of forgiveness following the model prayer. Because in that prayer he talks about forgive us our debts, as Barry mentioned earlier. And this is the aspect he focuses on out of all the things he could have said. And yet it's interesting when you look at what he says, he says if we forgive men their trespasses. Does that mean that we have to? Do they have to ask? What do we do?

Barry

You know in the Bible prayer is always followed by action. I think in our world today, sometimes people think about prayer as inaction. We give prayers we didn't do anything. But prayer is always, in the Bible, followed by action. I think that's what Jesus is emphasizing here. If we're going to pray to be forgiven, then we must take the action of forgiving others. And Jesus says it pretty definitely. You know if you forgive others God will forgive you, but if you don't he won't. And I think that's so difficult for us because it's that idea of being willing to forgive someone who has done you wrong. It is the model that Jesus had the on the cross. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." We see it with Stephen when he's being stoned. You know following that same example of Jesus. But that can be extremely difficult for us. Now, sometimes people get confused because we say well, what if someone doesn't ask for forgiveness? Do I have to forgive them?

John

You know, the question being asked when you say, "Do I have to?", I really think that's the wrong way to go about it. Because when we focus on the idea of "Do I have to do something?" Well, I don't guess you actually, technically, don't have to do that. Although Jesus very poignantly says that we need to forgive others. Now, keep in mind there is a difference between that person actually being forgiven and you actually forgiving them. You can have a forgiving heart, just as Jesus did, as you mentioned on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing." Now, were they forgiven at that moment? Well, they still had to come and ask for forgiveness. But Jesus was not going to allow the bitterness and the anger that he could have had towards them while he was on the cross. He was going to have that forgiving attitude towards them just as he's talking about here.

Barry

You know, we think forgiveness is something we give to other people, but forgiveness is something we give to ourselves. When we're willing to forgive someone, we get in tune with the grace of God who is forgiving. And I think that's exactly what he's emphasizing here. Your father forgives you because you forgive others. We see that reflected in several parables where Jesus looks at someone who wants forgiveness and doesn't forgive others. We see that in that sense of someone who looks at someone else who's been forgiven and feels upset by it. We need to understand that forgiveness is for ourselves because it puts us more like God. And the willingness to forgive, and waiting for someone to ask for it, because you're wanting them to seek forgiveness. And you need to have that. That's the essence of repentance. It's not just saying "I did something and I got away with it, and you got to deal with it." But rather, "I recognize I'm wrong. I'm going to go in a different direction." And if somebody's willing to do that, we should never be the hindrance to them by not giving forgiveness. And as a Christian, it's a dangerous attitude. Because once we become once we do that we go into that self-importance and that self-righteousness that Jesus has been condemning throughout Matthew chapter 6.

John

You know, it's also interesting that later on one of Jesus's disciples is actually going to ask him "How many times do I have to forgive my brother?" And he says up to seven times. He thinks he's being generous about that, right? And Jesus says well "No up to 70 times seven." Of course, the number is irrelevant because the idea is that as a person does something wrong, and in that particular context Matthew 18 and so

forth, he does talk about the idea of a person coming and asking to forgive them and you forgive them. But again, the concept though is for us to have a forgiving spirit. God gave us his grace. Grace is what we don't deserve. Someone who has done us wrong, we also can exhibit grace to them so that we can have that forgiving attitude.

Barry

We need to be very careful that we do not forget that a forgiven people must be a people who forgive. And if we truly want to be God's people, we have to be willing to forgive and have an attitude of forgiveness.

Thank you so much for joining with this time. You may have some more questions about this topic or some other topics. We'd love to hear from you. There's a contact page on the website that has telephone numbers. You can text or call or send us some send us a message through the website or just email us. We'd love to hear from you and we thank you so much for spending this time with us today.