Overcoming Un-forgiveness – There is A Time To Heal

INTRODUCTION:

A. Lesson Texts:
1. Colossians 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.
2. Luke 17:3 - Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.
3. Ephesians 4:32 - And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

B. **ILLUSTRATIONS**:
1. Plane on the runway ready for takeoff. Engines are ribbing but something is holding it back —Brakes.
2. The dragster is positioned at the starting line, its engines ribbing, but it isn't moving yet. Something is holding it back. — The clutch has it neutralized.
3. Neither the plane or the dragster are moving because something is holding each one back.
4. Sometimes we are not going forward because something is holding us back.

C. There are three kindred spirits of the human heart.
1. They are:
   a. Giving.
   b. Forgiving.
   c. Thanksgiving.
2. And usually, where you find one, you will find the others.

D. Sometimes we have trouble with forgiveness.
1. Sometimes we have trouble forgiving others.
2. Sometimes we have trouble forgiving ourselves.

E. Illustration: Sis. Donna Norwood.
1. Could not sing "Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me ." She did not feel like a wretch.
2. Failure to forgive bro. Earl Arnold. Blamed him for her husband's loss of health and eventual death. (Involved some decisions about the church and the creating of debt for the congregation.)

F. In order to be forgiven we must forgive. And in order to forgive, we must first overcome unforgiveness.

WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

A. What forgiveness IS NOT.
   1. Forgiveness is not just ignoring those who wrong us.
   2. Forgiveness is more than a refusal to strike a blow for blow, eye for an eye, or a tooth for tooth. A person can refrain from such and still harbor bitterness and ill will.
   3. Forgiveness is not ignoring the sin.
      a. God does not overlook sins . . . and neither should His people.
      b. Jesus said — . . . If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. Luke 17:3
      4. Forgiveness is not putting the offender on probation while we discuss how inexcusable his behavior was, and then promise to forgive if no further offenses are forthcoming.

B. What is forgiveness?
   1. Perhaps we can better tell what forgiveness is by observing what does when He forgives.
      a. When God forgives, He removes the notation of wrong from His record. Acts 3:19 - Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out . . .
      b. When God forgives . . . He forgets the wrong done. Hebrews 8:12 - For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.
      c. When God forgives, His actions toward us are as if the wrong had never occurred at all. Case in point . . . The prodigal Son.
   2. Perhaps we can better understand forgiveness when we see it demonstrated.
      a. In Genesis 33:4 - Esau forgave Jacob.
      b. In Genesis 50:10-21 - Joseph forgave his brothers.
      c. In Numbers 12:1-13 - Moses forgave his sister, Miriam and his brother, Aaron.
      d. In 1 Samuel 24:9-22 - David forgave Saul.
      e. In Luke 15:11-24 - The father forgave the prodigal son.

D. We can tell if we have forgiven another by taking the “Have I Really Forgiven My Offender” test.
   1. Do I secretly rejoice when I hear of some misfortune assailing my offender?
   2. Do I purposefully avoid his presence?
   3. Do I speak to him hesitatingly and only under duress?
   4. Do I vividly remember the wrong committed?
   5. Do I ever sit in silence and meditate and brood over the wrong done to me?
   6. If a particular circumstance arose related to the offender demanding prayer, would I happily and anxiously go to God in his behalf?

7. Have I sought an opportunity to do him a favor?

THE IMPORTANCE AND NECESSITY OF FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER.

A. It is a command. Both God and Christ command it. Mark 11:25-26 - And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.

B. The example of Jesus compels that we forgive others. Luke 23:34 - Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.

C. The examples of the early Christians compel us to forgive others. While being stoned to death, brother Stephen said in Acts 7:16, Lord, do not charge them with this sin.
   1. Those were his last words before entering the realm of eternity.
   2. He did not carry a spirit of unforgiveness with him to his grave.

D. Love calls for forgiveness. Peter said in 1 Peter 4:8 - And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."

E. Forgive because you have been forgiven. It is God's will that we . . . be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you (Ephesians 4:32).

F. We must forgive in order that we might be forgiven.
   1. It is a take it or leave it proposition!
      a. Forgive and be forgiven.
      b. Refuse forgiveness and have forgiveness refused to you.
   2. The price of not forgiving another is the loss of Heaven itself.
   3. **ILLUSTRATION**: If you will pardon a personal reference. Tell about the man I wanted to kill. And to travel the main route . . .
      a. I could not walk to school without walking by his front yard
      b. I could not walk to Church services without walking by his front yard.
      c. I could not walk to work at McLellan's Pharmacy without walking by his front yard
      d. I could not walk to town without walking by his front yard.
      e. I could not walk to the ball park without walking by his front yard.
   4. The difference was . . . I obey the Gospel of Christ and became a Christian. I forgave him and went on growing up without my dad.
   5. He who will not forgive, breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass.
   6. If we do not forgive another, we clog the channel through which divines forgiveness flows.

G. We must forgive in order to walk with God. Amos 3:3 - Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?

H. We must forgive, for it may be later than you think.
   1. Christ may come at any time. Mark 13:32 - But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

2. The person who have failed to forgive and toward whom you seek revenge, may die before the matter is resolved Scripturally.
   a. **ILLUSTRATION:** Thackeray and Dickens, two great literary masters back in the 19th century, became rivals. After several years of estrangement, they met accidentally in London, frigidly facing one another. On an impulse, Thackeray turned back and seized the hand of Dickens, who was touched by the gesture. They left smiling with the old jealousy destroyed. In just a few days Thackeray died, and the next time Dickens saw him was when he looked down at his form in the grave. A writer, later recalling the story, wrote, "IS IT NOT ALWAYS WELL TO SEEK FORGIVENESS NOW?"
   b. Will you be a Thackeray and be the first to take the hand of the one from whom you are estranged?
   c. Someone has to be the bigger person . . . let that be you.
3. You stand on the verge of eternity with the possibility of breathing your last at any moment.
   a. Illustration: After the death of Queen Caroline, Lord Chesterfield said a sad thing: "An unforgiving, unforgiven dies."
   b. Are you unforgiven?
   c. Are you unforgiving?

I. The parable of the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18:21.
   1. He had been forgiven but in turn would not later forgive another.
   2. Although previously forgiven . . . he was now on his way to torment because he would not forgive another as he himself had been forgiven. Such a shame . . . such a loss.

FOUR ATTITUDES TOWARD FORGIVENESS.

A. "<u>I cannot forgive</u>."
   1. God does not require the impossible.
   2. You can in only you will humble yourself to do so.

B. "<u>I'm going to forgive you, but in the future I'm not going to have anything to do with you</u>."
   1. That spirit is not the spirit of Christ.
   2. We are to forgive as Christ forgives.

C. "<u>I'm doing you a favor by forgiving you</u>."
   1. Contraire . . . actually, the reverse is true.
   2. The penitent offender can be forgiven of God without your extending forgiveness, but you cannot be forgiven unless you do forgive the offender.
   3. Do not put conditions upon forgiveness.

D. "I<u>'m going to forgive you, but I'll never forget it</u>."
   1. This is like burying the hatchet but leaving the handle sticking out.
   2. This is like sweeping the room but leaving the dirt behind the door.

3. Hebrews 10:17 - Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.

HOW TO CULTIVATE FORGIVENESS.

A. Remember that hatred, ill will and bitterness does far more to the one holding it than to the object for which it is directed.
   1. **ILLUSTRATION:** Brother Batsell Barrett Baxter told the story of riding on a plane next to a blind man who was an executive. Not being able to resist asking what caused hid blindness, the blind man answered brother Baxter by telling him how a competitor of his hired a gangster to throw acid in his face. Brother Baxter asked if he knew who the competitor was. "Yes, but I could not prove it in court," he said. When asked if he felt a terrible resentment, he said, "I did for years, but it dawned on me that I was doing myself the real injury. I forgave this man and actually have done him some favors in recent years.
   2. Forgiveness removes barriers that without forgiveness will remain . . . forever. They will not remove themselves.

B. You will find it easier to forgive when you consider how greatly you have been forgiven.

C. Ask God to help you. There is a difference in saying a prayer and praying a prayer.

D. In praying insert your offender's name.
   1. "Father forgive me of my trespasses as I forgive _____ for his trespasses against me."
   2. Jesus prayed for their forgiveness . . . not their punishment.

E. When speaking to others about the one who has done you an injustice, speak of them in a kind manner.

F. Develop an understanding heart. There is usually a cause behind why a person acts discourteously.

G. Cultivate the grace of being merciful and compassionate.

HOW ARE YOU TO FORGIVE?

A. Forgive from your heart . . . not just from your mouth.

B. We must forgive as Christ forgives:
   1. Freely — no constraints.
   2. Abundantly — no "piece-meals"
   3. Immediately — no time payments.
   4. Finally — does not bring it up again.
   5. Uncalculatingly — time and again.

HOW OFTEN MUST WE FORGIVE.

A. Peter thought seven times was sufficient.

1. How did he arrive at seven.
   a. The rabbi said to forgive three times.
   b. Peter doubled that number and added one, thinking this was more than sufficient.
2. Jesus taught differently than either or the rabbi. He said "seventy time seven." Another way of saying "no limits." Matthew 18:21-22
   a. Do not keep a ledger. Forgiveness is not a matter of arithmetic.
   b. You can never out-forgive God.

WHO MUST TAKE THE INITIATIVE IN THE MATTER OF EFFECTING FORGIVENESS?

A. **The offender**. Matthew 5:23-24 - Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.
   1. Before an offender can worship scripturally, he must first get things straightened out with the offended one.
   2. The shortest distance way to God may be the distance to your brother's house.
   3. If the inspired instructions of this passage were followed, a lot of worship services would be delayed until the brethren returned.
   4. Friends, there is no use trying to talk to God if we are not on speaking terms with out brother.

B. **The Offended**. Matthew 18:15-17 - Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

   But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three
   witnesses every word may be established.'

   And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.
   1. So many times the attitude is taken, 'Well, he sinned against me, so let him take the initiative."
   2. Again I ask, "Who will step forward and be the bigger person."
   3. Was not the God the offended One, and yet He took the initiative to reconcile mankind back to Himself in sending Jesus to die for our sins.

CONCLUSION:

A. Listening friends . . . forgiven sinners and forgiving sinners will go to Heaven. Unforgiven sinners and unforgiving sinners will not.

B. **ILLUSTRATION:** William J. Gaynor, mayor of New York City, was denounced and shot by a maniac, and was almost killed. While laying in the hospital, fighting for his life, he said, "Every night, I forgive everything and everybody.

C. Ecclesiastes 3:1-3 - To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven:

A time to be born, And a time to die; A time to plant, And a time to pluck what is planted;

A time to kill, And a time to heal; A time to break down, And a time to build up.

D. In the movie "Forrest Gump" there is a scene in which Forrest and his friend Jenny walk up to her old house she lived in growing up. It is now in such bad repair. But as she sees the house, it brought back some bad memories for Jenny and so she picks up some rocks and starts throwing them at the old house. And she throws rock after rock at the house until she is exhausted and weeping and then Forrest makes this comment, "Sometimes there just aren't enough rocks." And we the movie watchers knew that she threw the rocks because she never healed from the hurt of growing up in that house.
   1. Friends, The Bible tells us that don't need more rocks.
   2. We need to heal and move on with our lives.

E. There is a time to put down the rocks and begin to heal. . . . Forgiveness then healing.

F. When healing does not being, bitterness sets in.
   1. Forgive now and begin healing the wounds of the past.
   2. Let go and let God!

G. I must ask you this all-important question; Would you like to slip out into eternity during your sleep with a heart filled with hate, ill will, resentment and unforgiveness? Change now.

H. **God's Plan for Man's Salvation**
   1. Alien sinner.
   2. Erring brother.