

## Forgive as you have been Forgiven

Ephesians 4.17-32

### Overview

#### **Put off the old self and put on the new self**

- For the first three chapters Paul lays out all that it means to be in Christ
- From chapters 4-6 he then applies what it looks like to obey those truths
- Putting off the old self means putting away the person we were before Christ came into us:
  - Put away: futile thinking, callous hearts, lying, anger while sinning, stealing, corruptive talk, bitterness, wrath, clamor, malice (Vss. 17-32)
- Put on the new self which mimics the God who bought you (5.2)
  - Put on: Righteousness, holiness, honesty, anger while not sinning, hard work, words that build, kindness, tenderheartedness, love, forgiving as God in Christ forgave you

#### **Forgive as God in Christ forgave you**

- Forgiveness: A decision (a moment) and a promise (ongoing) to release a person by canceling the real debt a person has with you
- How did God in Christ forgive us?
  - Matthew 18.21-35: God is the king...we are the servant:
    - God forgave us a debt that was too large to pay
    - Unforgiveness is exacting a debt to others not in keeping with the enormity of what we have been forgiven
  - Christ forgave us a debt that none of us could pay...but He did it in Grace:
    - If we are unwilling to forgive as Christ forgave us (offer grace as He offered us)...the Heavenly Father will not forgive us
- Where we do not forgive our Spouses (friends, etc.) we do not act as though Christ forgave us:
  - What we are doing is “choking” our servant who owes us a much smaller wage
    - Our actions deny our understanding or comprehending the Gospel
- Why do we not forgive? Or, why are we not tenderhearted and kind?
  - Punishment: We want to exact a punishment on others even though we understand Christ to have taken our own punishment and, very possibly the punishment of the believer we are seeking to punish
    - “Vengeance is mine says the Lord” Romans 12.19
  - Protection: We want to keep forgiveness from our spouse (others) because we fear that they may cause more harm to us
    - By saying this you are not relating to others in the same way that you understand Christ to have treated you
    - Also: You are trusting in yourself to provide protection and not God, therein putting your trust in yourself, not God
      - There can be real consequences to sin that are not punishments that provide some protection, but ultimately we have to trust in God and relate to others as He related to us (Grace)
  - Plank: We don't forgive others because we think the speck in the other persons eye is bigger than the plank that is in our own
    - If we say this then we don't properly understand the grace that has been extended to us, just like the servant didn't understand the grace extended to him when he didn't extend grace to a lesser debt
    - Paul understands himself as the chief of sinners (Eph. 3.8, 1 Tim. 1.15-16)

- We should not think of ourselves more highly than we ought
- How can we get to a place where we forgive as God in Christ forgave us?
  - Meditate on the Gospel:
    - Mind: Consider the varied ways the Bible talks about the Atonement
    - Heart: Let those truths be warmed in your soul so that you gain a greater appreciation of how much you have been forgiven
  - Consider your self centeredness the main problem in the relationship:
    - The more you think of yourself as worse than the other, the more you will forgive and work for the joy of your spouse and then gain joy yourself
    - This is the same way God who is Triune works and we are created in His image

## Questions

**Discussion Starter:** *Has anyone been forgiven a very large debt? What was that like?*

1. Read Ephesians 4.17-32. Describe the differences between the old self and the new self. Try and flesh out what that looks like, not just using the terms...provide pictures of the two.
2. Read Matthew 6.14-15, 18.21-35. Describe how much the king forgave the servant. Talk about why it is so awful that the servant choked and threw the other servant in jail.
3. Ephesians 4:32 commands us to forgive as we've been forgiven. So, how did God in Christ forgive us?
4. Why does Christ/Paul use such strong language about forgiveness? In what way does it deny the Gospel and call into question one's salvation?
5. Describe some ways you have seen unforgiveness.
6. Why do we who have been forgiven so much find it so difficult to forgive others?
7. Share with the others some places you feel as though the Spirit is prompting you to forgive.

**Accountability Question:** *Who are you finding it difficult to forgive? What are some situations that you have forgiven? Offer prayer/praise where appropriate.*