

Introduction: This week in our study on the theme of forgiveness, we enlarge our net of verses from Jesus, in part because The Parable of The Wicked Servant (and its lesson on forgiveness in Matthew 18:23-35) is quite complicated, and it will help us to understand if we compare it to other verses to see how Jesus illuminates His teaching on forgiveness in the Gospels. This is the only safe way in which to approach Scripture: the comparing of more difficult texts with other verses on the same subject. May God make us faithful in our study of His Holy Book.

Monday: read Exodus 34:6-7. We begin this special study on forgiveness by going back to the spring, the headwaters, the source of all hope for forgiveness – in the character of God Himself. Nothing is more encouraging for a sinner than to find that, “there is forgiveness in God” (Psalm 130:4). There is nothing more basic to our hope of experiencing forgiveness than that the *very name of God is one that promises forgiveness!* How did God put it in Ex. 34:6-7?

And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.”

This is the Fountain of all forgiveness! In His nature, God is merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness. This alone is the reason sinners can be saved! There is a Divine heart, infinite in its forgiving power and willingness to forgive!

Meditate and Pray: Sing about the miracles of Divine forgiveness, using these words from a well-known hymn, # 253:

*There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel’s veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.
Lose all their guilty stains, lose all their guilty stains;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.*

*The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day;
And there have I, though vile as he, washed all my sins away.
Washed all my sins away, washed all my sins away;
And there have I, though vile as he, washed all my sins away.*

*Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood shall never lose its power
Till all the ransomed church of God be saved, to sin no more.
Be saved, to sin no more, be saved, to sin no more;
Till all the ransomed church of God be saved, to sin no more.*

*E’er since, by faith, I saw the stream Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be till I die.
And shall be till I die, and shall be till I die;
Redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be till I die.*

Tuesday: read Proverbs 25:1-2 and Psalm 130:1-4. God has always had the right *not to grant forgiveness to sinners*. His pardoning grace is entirely voluntary – since all to whom this gift is

offered *have no claim to it by right*. “All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God, and can only be justified (through forgiveness) **freely**”, with no merit on their part.

What response, then, should this message of free forgiveness produce in us? Well, according to Psalm 130:4, there is a holy reverence and awe which should motivate us to seek forgiveness from God, and then enter into His holy service as His thankful, forgiven servants. After all, it is awesome grace that God the King, (able by right to “search out” and condemn all iniquity according to Proverbs 25:2b), chooses to receive glory by “concealing our sins” in Proverbs 25:2 under His Son’s blood on the Cross!

Meditate and Pray: Ask the Lord to give you the “humble, penitential fear” of which hymn # 35 speaks:

*My God, how wonderful Thou art,
Thy majesty, how bright;
How beautiful Thy mercy seat
In depths of burning light!*

*How dread are Thy eternal years,
O everlasting Lord,
By prostrate spirits day and night
Incessantly adored!*

*How wonderful, how beautiful,
The sight of Thee must be;
Thy endless wisdom, boundless power,
And glorious purity!*

*O how I fear Thee, living God,
With deep and tender fear;
And worship Thee with trembling hope,
And penitential tears!*

*Yet, I may love Thee, too, O Lord,
Almighty as Thou art;
For Thou hast stooped to ask of me
The love of my poor heart!*

Wednesday: read 2 Peter 2:4-9 and Romans 8:32. Our awe-filled thankfulness for forgiveness from God increases as we consider again *how utterly free and justified God would have been in not providing mankind with any hope of forgiveness.*

For example, take the angels who fell, with their leader Satan, before the world was made. Peter tells us clearly that, “they were not spared”. Justice was served, and they were eternally cast out of Heaven because of their one heinous sin of rebellion against God.

Well, what about our case? Interestingly, the same language is used in Romans 8:32, but this time for our salvation, and not our condemnation! As John Owen writes (vol 6, pg. 430);

He spared not the sinning angels. It is the same word which God uses when He speaks of laying all our iniquities on Christ (Rom. 8:32) and having Him undergo the punishment due to our sin. Just as God “did not spare the angels” but inflicted on them the penalty due for sin, shutting them up in chains of darkness for the judgment day, so He did not spare His own Son the complete condemnation which our sins deserved.

Meditate and Pray: Let us thank God that we can truly see the amazing scope of our forgiveness by measuring the suffering of God’s Son on the Cross, enduring the Hell our sins deserved.

Thurs/Fri: read Matthew 4:12-17 and Psalm 103:1-5. We continue to add verse after verse to our understanding of forgiveness – a forgiveness from God alone which is to be greatly valued by His people. The Divine gift of forgiveness, according to Charles Spurgeon, is one of the most precious treasures of our salvation. Here is what he says in comments on Psalm 103, likening forgiveness to one of the ‘pearls’ of God’s love towards us:

Here are a few of the choicest pearls from the treasury of Divine love, threaded on the string of memory, and hung about the neck of gratitude. Forgiveness is first in the order of our spiritual experience, and in some respects first in value. The pardon granted in Psalm 103:3 is a present one -- forgives; it is continual, for He still forgives; it is Divine, for God gives it; it is far reaching, for it removes all our sins ... and it is most effective, for it is as real as the the rest of the mercies with which it is placed.

No wonder Jesus opens His ministry of preaching in Matthew 4:17 by commanding people everywhere to, “*Repent and Believe*”! Without the Divine gift of repentance, whereby God works in us a sorrow for sin and a turning from it by faith, there can be no experience of forgiveness! It is because Jesus *Himself* treasured the act of forgiving sin that He was willing to pay such a high price in His preaching, convicting men of their sin. Many hated Him for it. But Jesus would endure the rejection of 99 wolves in sheep’s clothing in order to find the one lost sheep and grant it forgiveness!

Meditate and Pray: Let us “Bless the Lord, and not forget one of His benefits” – especially the gift of forgiveness! Let us especially focus our thankfulness on Jesus’ Christ’s saving work, without which there would be no forgiveness!