

## What's So Amazing About Grace Part 4

### It Forgives

Tonight we are going to try and clarify the discussion we had last week. I first need to apologize for not studying enough, being confusing, and frustrating some if not most of you by what we talked about. I should have made sure I was clear on what I was thinking and researched a little more the overall issue before ever trying to teach you on it. With that in mind I have spent a great deal more energy this week and especially the past two days on the issue of grace and forgiveness. I hope because of my efforts we can learn together through our interaction. However, I do want to start out by saying, I don't totally understand all the specifics of forgiveness. In fact there have been many of times this week that I have had to stop in my studying because God was convicting me and I needed to repent of my sin of unforgiveness to Him before I could understand a little more of what has been going on.

- Part of the problem we had last week was trying to find out the connection between grace and forgiveness. Let me paint a couple word pictures and illustrations for you.
  - 1) Grace is like an umbrella, forgiveness is like the handle of the umbrella. The whole unit and invention is the umbrella. The handle is part of the whole. There are different parts of an umbrella that aren't the handle but are the umbrella. Grace can be manifested in many different ways and forgiveness is just one of those.
- 2) Grace is like a "word" and forgiveness is like a "letter" in the word.  
3) Grace is like the ceiling and forgiveness is like the ceiling tile.
- In each of our examples forgiveness is a part of the whole and grace is the finished product.

With this in mind we are going to look at three principles of forgiveness. These are principles that make up a little bit of what forgiveness is. These aren't the only aspects that one could get from studying forgiveness but are just a part. Hopefully these will help us this week as we try to be forgiving people and show grace to all who are around us.

Principle: We need to and are commanded to forgive others

1. Because God has forgiven us
  - a. Colossians 3.13

<sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Paul is commanding us here to show the forgiveness that we received when we believed in Christ and what he did for us. This forgiveness was unconditionally and came from the depths of who God is.

2. By forgiving others we are forgiven by God

a. Matthew 6.14 <sup>MT 6:14</sup> For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. <sup>15</sup> But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

b. Matthew 18.35 <sup>MT 18:35</sup> "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

- c. Luke 11. 4 <sup>LK 11:4</sup> Forgive us our sins,

for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.

And lead us not into temptation. ' "

d. Luke 6.37 <sup>LK 6:37</sup> "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. <sup>38</sup>

e. Mark 11.25-26 <sup>25</sup> And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. "

Here the bible teaches that if I don't forgive others then I won't be forgiven myself. It is as if God's forgiveness for Christians is conditioned on some things that we do. The point is not that we must do something to receive Christ and get our initial forgiveness but in order to continually get the benefits of receiving forgiveness we must forgive others. To be honest with you I don't totally understand how this works but from the above passages this is what the Bible is teaching us concerning forgiveness. There is some link between my forgiveness of others and God's forgiveness for me.

Principle: Forgiveness goes against what we legally have right to.

1. Matthew 18.35 <sup>MT 18:35</sup> "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

2. Matthew 5.38-42 <sup>MT 5:38</sup> "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' <sup>39</sup> But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. <sup>40</sup> And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. <sup>41</sup> If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. <sup>42</sup> Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

When we go to forgive someone we are saying that we are not going to use the rights we have legally against them and will not hold them responsible in the future. This is the hardest aspect of forgiveness I believe. This is the clearest when the issue is one vs one and does not include a group of people and rules that have clearly been laid out.

When the rules have clearly been laid out we can forgive but the legality of the issue may still proceed, as is the case in a murder trial. The offended person/group can forgive the person but the crime was also committed against the state and people in general. That is why I say that the government cannot totally operate by grace and forgiveness, because the government represents people and is made up of people that are not believers and Christians. But as Christians we are told to forgive the person and yet we are still to obey the government that God has set up.

This aspect of forgiveness brings up the point that someone must pay during the process of forgiveness. This can either be the offended or the person who offended. We will talk about this a little more in just a minute how this can be the case. Like I said this is the one true part that I don't feel we may ever truly understand here on earth and one day in heaven may total know what God means in this.

Principle: We forgive out of love.

1. Colossians 3.12-13 <sup>COL 3:12</sup> Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. <sup>13</sup>

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.<sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Forgiveness comes out of our love for God, ourselves, and others. Paul here tells us that love above all things holds most of the other Christian outworkings in unity and holds together everything else we may do. Forgiveness is one of those acts that we benefit from when we do it. We may think that someone doesn't deserve forgiveness but we must also understand that we need to forgive them for what has happened for our own health and well-being. In Yancy's book *What's So Amazing About Grace* he tells a story of how unhealthy it is to not forgive someone. Not forgiving doesn't just hurt your relationship with God it hurts your health as well.

As we start to close our time together lets look at three statements concerning forgiveness.

Forgiveness does not condone an action but loves the person.

Forgiveness does not punish the person but disciplines the person.

Forgiveness does not alleviate the consequences from occurring but encourages the person to do better.

Now I want each person to take two pieces of paper which are coming around at this time.

1) something you need to forgive someone else

2) something you want God to forgive you off.