

Willing to Forgive

Sermon by Andy Sochor

Text: Luke 17:3-4

Jesus taught His disciples about the need to forgive those who sin against them. Yet it is not always easy to do this, especially when the sin is habitual – seven times a day (Luke 17:4) or seventy times seven (Matthew 18:22). However, as the Lord's disciples, we must be willing to forgive others as He has forgiven us. What does this forgiveness look like?

In the Moment: Do Not Retaliate

- Jesus taught about turning the other cheek (Matthew 5:38-39) – He cited the law regarding punishment (Leviticus 24:19-21); yet Jesus was not talking about punishment, but retaliation; punishment is about impartial justice; retaliation is a partial or biased form of vengeance
- When others sin against us, there is a temptation to react – it is easy to sin when we do not stop to think; yet when Jesus was crucified, He did not react in kind (1 Peter 2:21-23); this is an example for us
- We are to be “quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger” (James 1:19) – we must be “patient when wronged” (2 Timothy 2:24); learn to exercise self-control, not immediately react

In the Short Term: Do Not Obsess

- We may get angry, but we must not sin (Ephesians 4:26) – we sometimes have a tendency to dwell on a wrong committed against us; this is why Paul said we are not to “let the sun go down on [our] anger”; we are not to hold onto our anger and allow the wrong committed against us to consume our thoughts
- When others sin against us, there is a temptation to respond – there is a proper way to do this (Matthew 18:15); but responding improperly “[gives] the devil an opportunity” (Ephesians 4:27); we end up seeking revenge
- We are not to take our own vengeance (Romans 12:17-20) – we are to fill our minds with what is good (Philippians 4:8); we cannot do this and obsess over some wrong that has been done against us

In the Long Term: Do Not Hold a Grudge

- James warned against holding a grudge against one another (James 5:9) – “do not complain” (NASB); this word indicates a sigh, grief, or complaint from the heart (cf. Romans 8:23); James was referring to a deep-felt resentment against someone
- When others sin against us, there is a temptation to remember – it is fine to not let someone take advantage of us again, but this is an unwillingness to let go; Paul could have held a grudge against those who refused to support him (2 Timothy 4:16), but he

did not; Jesus could have held a grudge against Paul (Acts 9:4, 15), but He showed mercy instead (1 Timothy 1:12-16)

- Remember what really matters (Matthew 6:33) – this means we should not worry about tomorrow (Matthew 6:34); it also means we cannot worry about the past and allow it to hinder us, including sins against us; forget what lies behind and press on toward the goal (Philippians 3:13-14)

Conclusion

- The Lord is willing to forgive us, no matter what we have done
- We must be willing to forgive others as well (Matthew 6:14-15)
- We should strive to be as forgiving as the Lord is toward us