

LOVE OF CHRIST BAPTIST CHURCH

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BIBLE STUDY OUTLINE

Date: November 27, 2017

Text: Col. 3:13

Topic: Teaching on Forgiveness

INTRODUCTION

A recap from last week discourse on forgiveness was that avoidance, getting away with it and toleration are not the same as forgiveness. We establish that forgiveness comes from the heart, and it is a process. In the same vein, the doctrine of forgiveness makes Christians different from all other religions, it is fundamental to our faith. Today we shall move further on the subject.

In forgiveness, there are five stages: realizing the wrongdoing, reaffirming the love, realizing the past, renewing repentance and rediscovering community, says David Ausburger.

Poser

1. What are the effects of unforgiveness?
2. When forgiveness is effected, will the relationship be as it was in the beginning?

Our Attitudes Towards Forgiveness

1. **A new attitude.** This concerns how we deal with the past. We make a choice to deal with festering hurts and to embark on the journey of forgiveness. We decide neither to perpetuate the hostility nor to suppress the hurts and allow them to eat away inside us. A refusal to forgive binds us eternally to the past. Our personality becomes frozen, we cannot move on from the moment of the offense, and we are incapable of living fully in the present. As injured people, we too require soul surgery. In some cases, we need to admit our contribution to the breakdown in relationship. In other cases, where we have been passive victims, we need to confess that we have allowed the event to hinder our spiritual growth and that righteous anger has become self-righteous bitterness. By choosing the way of forgiveness, we are prepared to change our attitude toward those who have hurt us. We are prepared to forget and to acknowledge that someday we may be able to love them. Loving Christians, if they are to model God, must keep no record of wrongs (1 Cor. 13:5; Psalm 103: 3, 4).
2. **A new perspective.** This concerns how we cope with the present. We begin by viewing people differently. We attempt to get outside the hurts and raging of our present brokenness and see our enemy as God sees them (2 Cor. 5:16). The temptation will be to view those who have injured us in a reductionist manner, seeing them totally in terms of their sin, when in reality they are normal people, a mixture of the image of God and sinful humanity. We are blinded to their true identity because of the sin they have committed against us. Real forgiveness cannot take place unless we are prepared to see

them as they truly are, and not as the demons we have perceived them to be in the midst of our hurt and anguish. A test of whether our anger is righteous and directed against the sin, or unrighteous and directed against the sinner, would be to ask ourselves whether we would find greater pleasure in the conversion or restoration of the sinner than in their destruction. Or can we imagine a situation where we would actively wish the person well? This takes time, but a new perspective will enable us to work to that end.

3. **A new determination.** This deals with the possibilities of the future. Forgiveness opens the door to new possibilities in relationship which would have been unthought of at the start of the journey. That is why forgiveness must be unconditional. If we lay down conditions, it means we are choosing the future and seeking to manipulate the other person into satisfying our unrealistic demands. If our demands are truly just, then the God of justice will see to it that they are met in the context of dialogue, growing trust and reconciliation. Reconciliation is not a return to old ways, a turning of the clock back to the exact moment of the offense. This is a new world. Circumstances have changed: the injured body may be irreparably damaged, or the marriage may be irretrievably lost because of new relationships. "We make our new beginnings, not where we used to be or where we wish we could be, but only where we are and with what we have at hand" We can only forgive today with today's circumstances. "Forgiveness is letting what was, be gone; what will be, come; what is now, be". **Forgiveness naturally involves risks.** We open the door not only to a bright new future but to the possibility of repeated injury. But where there is no risk, there is no need of forgiveness. Forgiveness does not deal with contracts and guarantees but with covenant and trust. That is God's way with us, and it must be our way with each other (Deut. 4: 30, 31)

Let me leave you with this truth that forgiveness is borne out of love, not out of confession. It is the love of Christ in us that makes forgiveness possible. So, beloved forgive, and get out of the bondage of unforgiveness.

The study continues...