

LIVING AND FORGIVING AS A CHILD OF GOD (Matthew 18)

Last summer we had the "Summer of Psalms", where we looked at some of the Psalms and recognized that not only are they inspiring, encouraging, and uplifting, they are, just as the Proverbs are, just as the whole of the Word of God is, a great reservoir of doctrine, or teachings, so that we can get to know God and better understand Him, so that we can put our trust in Him, and then also, that we will then honor Him; not just with our lips but with our hearts and in how we live our lives. As the Apostle Paul told his spiritual son Timothy, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be **complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**" (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

This summer we have been looking at the teachings of, and parables of, Jesus. Within the parables of Jesus we are seeing how it is truly, God who is doing the seeking, at least initially, and it is God who is doing the saving (for we cannot save ourselves), and it is God, through the great sacrifice of His only begotten Son, Christ Jesus, that He has paid the price for our salvation so that we can be children of God. As God seeks us out and speaks to us, through His Word and by His Holy Spirit, we are then led to what Jesus taught, such as Him saying to not worry about tomorrow or even what you will eat or wear, "**But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.**" (Matthew 6:33) Christ Jesus has already paved the way for us, "tetelestai"-"**It is finished**", dying on a cross for our sins against God, taking our sins upon Himself to the grave, yet conquering death, sin, and evil, rising from the grave on the third day and is now seated on His throne at the right hand of God. Praise the Lord!

Christ Jesus did that because God loves those of whom He seeks to save. As Jesus tells us, "**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.**" (John 3:16-17) It is then up to us, to respond to God's seeking us, and revealing His truth to us and His love for us, of what He has done for us, so that we may begin our new life in Christ Jesus. As the Apostle John reminds us, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." (1 John 3:1-3) Those words purifies and pure is from the Greek word "hagnos" which

basically means to be "undefiled by sin"¹. How do we go about purifying ourselves? We must always remember, as the Apostle Paul spoke of 4 things, in **1 Corinthians 1:30**, that come from God through Christ, for us to live victoriously as children of God. He is our Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption. That process, once again, is succinctly stated in **Ephesians 2:8-10**. "For by **grace** you have been saved through **faith**, and that not of yourselves; it is the **gift of God**, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Putting that all together then means that while Christ Jesus is our Righteousness and Sanctification, we also stop practicing sin. Just as a child is taught by parents, hopefully, to behave, we are being taught by God through His Word and His Spirit how to live according to His Righteousness.

=====

Who Is the Greatest?

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, "**Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted** [Greek word strepho, to change direction] **and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.**" [In Mark's account of this dialogue between Jesus and His disciples, Jesus also said, "**If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.**" (Mark 9:35)]

Jesus Warns of Offenses

"**But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.** [We can see a double meaning in what Jesus was saying. Woe to those who cause a child to stumble and woe also to those who cause a child of God to stumble, someone who is still new or weak in their faith.] **Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes! If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.**"

=====

While Jesus was using hyperbole, that is, extreme exaggeration in His examples, the point was made, that we are to take our faith in Christ seriously, as it does affect and influence other people. Sometimes good and sometimes bad. The summation of the doctrine of Christ, or

1 <https://biblehub.com/greek/53.htm>

teachings of Christ Jesus, are in what Jesus said was the greatest commandment of God and the second that is like unto it: to love God with all that is in us, and to love others as ourselves. (Mark 12:30-31) In Matthew's account of Jesus saying that, Jesus concluded by saying "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:40) While we are living our lives in Christ by faith, our believing on Christ Jesus is also believing on His teachings too, right? The Apostle John tells us, "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son." (2 John 1:9) Just as Jesus gave the metaphor in John 15 of Jesus being the Vine and we are His branches, Jesus said to abide in Him and concluded by saying, "for without Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5) Jesus has all we need, as we believe on Him and receive Him, by being converted or born-again. He then is working in His children the fruit of the Spirit, "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (Galatians 5:22-23)

=====

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

"Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven. For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."

Dealing with a Sinning Brother

"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. [keeping in mind and operating in the fruit of the Spirit] If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' [once again, according to the fruit of the Spirit] And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

=====

There's clearly something special about praying together, with one another, and praying for one another. First and foremost then, we need to be praying for one another. We can't save ourselves and we certainly can't fix or save anyone else, but Jesus can! Another thing

to consider, when Jesus said to consider an unrepentant person as a heathen or a tax collector, what does that mean? In **Matthew 5:43-45**, Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, **love** your enemies, **bless** those who curse you, **do good** to those who hate you, and **pray** for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven." What that leads us to understand is that considering someone as a heathen and a tax collector, we can and should be praying for them, and we have to be careful about not getting entangled in their sin and rebellion. The Wisdom from God may also be telling you to stay clear of that person. You don't take the risk of being in a drug-dealer's home and possibly being implicated in their crimes unless being led by the Holy Spirit. Also, primarily our fellowship should be with one another. The Apostle Paul warned, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them." (**Ephesians 5:11**) Contrary to that, the Apostle John said, "that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ."

=====

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

=====

As the saying goes, for anyone who holds onto unforgiveness, it principally harms themselves and not the one to whom they are not forgiving. But really, harboring unforgiveness can affect not only the one that is holding onto that unforgiveness, but also the one they refuse to forgive, and also other people in that person's life. Similar to gossip, that spreads like a contagious disease. Yet as God's Word tells us, "And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins" (**1 Peter 4:8**) and in **Proverbs 10:12** it says, "Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins."

To close, let us look at **1 Peter 4:12-19**. "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters [sounds like gossip-and we can add or in unforgiveness]. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in **doing good**, as to a faithful Creator." As Jesus tells us, "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven." (**Luke 6:37**) The companion of that is to keep praying for one another, and in the end Christ Jesus will separate those who are His from those are are not. We are called to be living and forgiving as a child of God-to which it all is to the glory of God. As it is written, His work is before Him [that's us] and His reward is with Him. (**Isaiah 40:10**) Therefore let us love one another and forgive one another and pray for one another, as we are children of God!