

Forgiveness

Chris Marshall – Beyond Retribution – Michigan Grand Rapids – Eerdmans -2001

Matt 6:12

Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtor

Luke 23:34

Jesus said, "**Father, forgive them**, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

Trace Jesus recorded life – after resurrection – the things He did and said

Consider: He did not sort out:

The soldier who took his clothes – as He died

The soldier who gave him vinegar – when He had other things on His mind

Pontius pilate who sentenced Him

The guy in the Sanhedrin who punched Him in the face

Annas

Caiaphas

Forgiveness is:-

The response of victims

- it requires them to face the truth of what they have done to hurt someone else – and ask them for forgiveness – not entirely private affair
- On the Cross, God becomes the innocent victim of human cruelty and abuse, yet He chooses freely to forgive those who crushed Him.

Something given freely to the perpetrator

- “Gift for” – freely given, generosity
- Audible word or visible action
- Act of the heart, personal encounter, enduring re-orientation of life

A release for the victim

- it is for the benefits of the person offended against
- The victim has suffered hurt, has been violated, self worth, well-being
- Letting go of the power the offense and the offender have over a person

Does not repay in kind

- It is not instinctive or natural – does not repay by inflicting equal suffering
- When an individual is hurt or abused – he or she is sinned against
- If he or she responds likewise, becomes a sinner –emulates the offender

Fulfilled in reconciliation

- The goal of love is to reestablish communion – open trusting relationships
- Both parties commit themselves accept each other and begin a new relationship
- May not be possible or practical – performed in the spirit
- Never going back to the old – by definition, it must be new or renegotiated.

Forgiveness is not:-

Weakness

- Not – impotence, allowing abuse, cowardice
- Requires immense courage and strength
- Empowered by the Holy Spirit
- We are healed by each other

Excusing of wrong

- To forgive wrong-doing is not similar to tolerating or minimizing evil
- Demands ethical seriousness
- Enthrones justice – God is a Just God

Denial

- Does not accept repressing pain or guilt
- Does not say "it wasn't so bad"
- Means admitting the rage, even disdain or hatred towards an offender
- (Psalms and David)

Forgetfulness

- Not = "forgive and forget" = not mutually dependent
- Need to consciously recall memory of the event – to deal with it
- Help of Holy Spirit to reveal

Automatic

- Does not happen of its own accord
- Not necessarily expected reaction
- Lifelong learning process – novices – on a journey – time and effort

Dynamics of forgiveness

Acknowledging the situation needing forgiveness – honest assessment of suffering

Deciding to enter the forgiveness cycle – an act of the will – a choice, a decision

Giving voice to the pain and anger –injury can be rational, emotional, moral, material, and spiritual –requires courage.

Being open to the offender – must deal with attitudes towards offender, and change their feelings accordingly – disengage the offender from the behaviour, change the identity.

Being willing to experience the "fellowship of suffering" – both offender and victim are bound together by the common act (offense) – guilt and shame :-: bitterness and pain. Both victim and offender need each other to experience liberation and healing.

Forgiving other parties –these might have been involved – or blamed – for the offense (Failing to protect!) – these judgments and relationships need to be worked through.

Becoming reconciled and at peace with the past –repairing and restoring the past – to a new position and potential for both parties – offender and victim. No turning back, dealing positively with memories and feelings. Might involve a tangible expression of genuineness – not restitution.

Becoming reconciled with the persons involved in the episode –a renewed relationship between the injurer and the injured. Might require to be done in the spirit –in faith. Not necessarily a closer or better relationship – but a sense of well-being, of good health, of Shalom – over the incident.