

Reconciliation and Forgiveness, Matthew 18:15-35

“Surely our misery he himself bore, and our sorrows he carried; yet we ourselves esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. Yet he was wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. The chastening for our well-being fell upon him, and by his scourging we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:4)
The God of creation sent his own son, who humbled himself and became subject to the whims of that which he created in order to provide the path to salvation and eternal life, forgiveness of sins. But that very creation, by virtue of self-absorbed pride and a misguided notion of personal integrity, refuses to follow that divine example.

A Rule for Reconciliation, v.15-20.

- If your brother sins:
 - Against whom, you or someone else? _____
 - What constitutes a “sin?” How picky do we get? _____
- If he doesn't listen, escalate the offensive, right?
 - What cautions do we need to heed here? _____
- If he still refuses to listen, throw him out!
 - Perhaps justified for some offenses, but should we be cautious here? _____
- A warning from Jesus about the risk of this much authority.
 - Whatever you bind or loose. _____
 - Whatever you agree on. _____

Forgiveness, or rather the results of unforgiveness, v.21-35.

- A question and an answer.
 - Peter: “how much must I forgive, as many as seven times?” _____
 - Jesus: “up to seventy times seven.” (Hyperbole) _____
- A parable regarding the kingdom rules for forgiveness, v.23-35.
 - A slave who owed ten million dollars. _____
 - The legal response, “sell him and his family.” _____

- The entreaty of the slave and the gracious act of the king forgiving the debt. _____
- The slave's subsequent act of unforgiveness. _____
- The king's final act of reinstating the debt and handing the slave over for punishment. _____
- A warning from Jesus regarding the eternal results of our unforgiveness.
 - So shall my heavenly father also do to you. (uh-oh) _____

Forgiveness: a biblical imperative for the followers of Christ.

- For the record: textual support.
 - Matt. 18:35. _____
 - Matt. 6:14, if you do not forgive . . . _____
 - Mark 11:25, whenever you pray, forgive . . . _____
 - Eph. 4:32, Col. 3:13, be kind, patient, and forgiving to one another . . . _____
- A spiritual test: your forgiveness score?
 - Do you forgive without reservation? _____
 - Do you limit your forgiveness to some while judging others? _____
 - Do you understand the difference between accountability and blame? _____
 - Do you feel the need to recall past offenses of others? _____
- The positive effect of forgiveness.
 - On the forgiven:
 - Release, relief, reconciliation. _____
 - A new start. _____
 - On the forgiver:
 - You can burn the trunk full of offenses against you. _____
 - Reconciliation: to both God and humans. _____

When we refuse to forgive or require “repayment” before forgiveness, we deny the value of the redemptive act of Jesus, and we step out of God's grace. Regardless of our rationalizations, we are in effect waving an angry fist at God.