

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Forgiving From The Heart

(Jerry Fite)

Jesus concluded his parable highlighting forgiveness by saying, “*So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not everyone his brother from your hearts*” (Matthew 18:35). Forgiving from the heart denotes a sincere and genuine forgiveness. But here our heart is made aware of a sobering thought. What will my heavenly Father do unto me, if I do not forgive from the heart?

We are to forgive from a heart knowing God will not forgive us if we do not genuinely forgive others. This is the point of the parable (Matthew 18:23-35). A servant owes the king 10,000 talents and cannot immediately pay the debt. Pleading for patience, the servant receives compassion from the king who forgives him of the debt. When released of his debt, he finds a fellow servant who owes him 100 shillings. He rigorously demands payment. He does not forgive with compassion, even though he was forgiven by the king far more than what his fellow servant owed him. His king, when learning of his servant’s unwillingness to for-

give, demands what was owed him. This is where Jesus’ summary statement is made. We must forgive others knowing God will not forgive us when we need forgiveness (Matthew 6:14-15).

Forgiving from the heart is a heart that is not calculating the wrongs done, but is a heart always ready to forgive. Peter asked, “*How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him...*” No doubt thinking magnanimously, Peter immediately adds, “*until seven times?*” Jesus follows the line of thinking, but takes it to a different meaning. Jesus says not seven but the complete number 7 multiplied by 10 times 7. Jesus is not saying that one must forgive 490 times, but the limit is reached at this point and one does not have to forgive the 491st. time. He is saying the heart is ready always to forgive.

What is the limit of your forgiveness? If one wrongs you once and you forgive; and then wrongs you a second time, and you forgive; you are probably at your limit. Does it not make you look foolish to keep on being

wronged and you respond with forgiveness? After all, does not the world think in terms, “*fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me*”. But forgiving from the heart involves being always ready to forgive, not having a certain limit to forgiveness.

Forgiving from the heart, is a heart knowledgeable of how God forgives. While always ready to forgive, God does not forgive until we repent (Acts 8:22). As God has forgiven us, we are to forgive others with a “*tender*” and “*kind*” heart (Ephesians 4:32). While we should always be ready to forgive, “*if he repent, forgive him*” is the god-like way we should forgive from the heart (Luke 17:3).

We must forgive as God forgives, being ready to forgive the penitent with compassion. We will forgive with a heart never to apply the wrong again. When your heart says “I just cannot forgive anymore,” tell yourself, “Do I want God to quit forgiving me?” He will, if we quit forgiving from the heart those who sin against us!