

## sermon notes

Inbox



**DAVID JEWELL** Mon 18 May, 07:43 (1 day ago)

to DAVID

### **Forgiving as we have been forgiven**

**'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us'**

One of the greatest qualities in a Christian is the capacity to forgive. That is not to say that this is not easy and can be done immediately. We all have stories about the difficulty of forgiving someone who has wronged us, particularly if they either have no idea that they have hurt us or are indifferent or possibly enjoy that fact! As we go over in our minds about the small things that have challenged our sense of forgiveness, we are dwarfed by the issues that others face-those like Gordon Wilson-whose grandchild was killed by a terrorist bomb in Northern Ireland, Corrie Ten Boom-who we will see and hear from in a few minutes, and Desmond Tutu, who brought about the truth and reconciliation committee in South Africa.

However, before we talk about this, we are first reminded that **in the Lord's Prayer Jesus taught His disciples-that then includes us- to ask God to forgive our sins.** Before we pray this petition, we must therefore have a sense of sin. Now many resent being called sinners because in their minds it means being termed a drunk, an adulterer or a thief. However, Jesus uses the word 'opheilema' here, which means 'a debt'-a failure to pay what is due. Have we perfectly fulfilled our debt to God and to others? Of course not, especially to our parents. So, we are to ask God for forgiveness as, just like an

arrow failing to hit the target, in many ways and on many occasions we fall short.

**Now we reach the scary part!** What this in effect says is, 'forgive us our sins in proportion to how we forgive those who have sinned against us'. This is the only petition in the Lord's prayer with a clause attached-it doesn't say previously, 'Give us this day our daily bread if we work for it', so why is God's forgiveness made on condition and in proportion to our forgiving others, why if we refuse to forgive others will God refuse to forgive us, according to Jesus? I'm sure that many of us have heard or even said the words, 'I will never forgive so-and-so for what they did to me'. Being a Christian is hard work sometimes and this is one of those times, we cannot remain obdurate in our sense of victimhood and proudly denounce our fellow human, no- human forgiveness and divine forgiveness are inextricably intertwined. **There are Christians who struggle to forgive, but there are many believers who find the supernatural ability to forgive. So, FIRSTLY, it is not easy to forgive, it takes an act of will and may well take struggle and emotional upheaval to get to the point of forgiving someone who may have committed horrible things against us. Constantly when I meet with individuals here and in my previous churches, the need to forgive is voiced and the terrible difficulty of it. SECONDLY, please can I take a few minutes to correct any erroneous ideas we may have about forgiveness.**

Sometimes victims think it means having to take on board things that they couldn't possibly accept. This is what forgiveness does not necessarily entail:

**Forgiveness is not...**

**1. FORGIVENESS IS NOT APPROVING OR DIMINISHING WRONGDOING.** You have been wronged; someone has taken advantage and that is wrong.

**2. FORGIVENESS IS NOT ENABLING WRONGDOING.** If we don't actively work towards confrontation and forgiveness, then we help prolong the abuse.

**3. FORGIVENESS IS NOT DENYING A WRONGDOING.** "It didn't happen. I forgot all about it. I just moved on. I pretend like it never happened. I didn't let it affect me." That's not true. It's not the denial of a wrongdoing. Forgiveness is not denying that you were sinned against.

**4. FORGIVENESS IS NOT WAITING FOR AN APOLOGY.** Some people will say, "I will forgive them as soon as they say they're sorry." Some people are never going to apologize, either because they don't care or they haven't realised their offence.

**5. FORGIVENESS IS NOT FORGETTING.** This is one of the great Christian myths. "Well, we forgive and forget." No, we don't! You can't forgive and forget. You can't. "Forget it"? You can't forget it. It's impossible. I have lovely people coming to see me who are still experiencing pain many years after the event.

**6. FORGIVENESS IS NOT CEASING TO FEEL THE PAIN.** Just because it hurts doesn't mean you've failed to forgive. It still hurts. Some people have had horrible things done to them. Horrible things. It would be so cruel to say, "Well, if you've forgiven them, it shouldn't hurt anymore." Well, it does.

**7. FORGIVENESS IS NOT A ONETIME EVENT.** It's not like you forgive someone and it's over. Sometimes, they keep sinning, so you need to keep forgiving. Or sometimes you forgive them, but there are emotional moments where it feels fresh. Jesus stated that we should be prepared to forgive someone four hundred and ninety times!

**8. FORGIVENESS IS NOT NEGLECTING JUSTICE.** You can forgive someone and call the police and have them arrested. You can forgive someone and testify against them in court. They'd say, "I

thought you forgave me." "I do. I forgive you. But you've committed a crime. You've broken the law. And so, there are consequences."

**9. FORGIVENESS IS NOT TRUSTING.** No way. See, trust is built slowly. It's lost quickly. Trust may take a long time to be restored.

**10. FORGIVENESS IS NOT RECONCILIATION.** It's not that you're friends and everything's okay. You're close and it's back to normal. Not at all. It takes one person to repent. It takes one person to forgive. It takes two people to reconcile.

**If we are then to exhibit Christian forgiveness in our lives three things are vital:**

1. We must learn to understand, we must seek actively to find out about those who cause us harm-are they worried or in pain? Are they victims themselves or perhaps they find it hard to get on with others generally? We should seek to understand before we allow ourselves to condemn. If we can then we should pray regularly for them.

2. We must learn to move on, to be the bigger person, to recognise the supreme call to forgive on our lives. To recognise as well that lack of forgiveness leads to bitterness and that will destroy us. It is like an soul-wrecking microwave which burns us from the inside out!

3. We must learn to love. True Christian love seeks only the highest good for others, no matter what they do or say to us. Jesus' words on the cross: "Father forgive them for they don't know what they are doing."

However, you may still be saying to yourself, 'Yes, I know this is all true and I've heard it all before, but it won't stop my feelings, and I was so wounded by this person, and it is so unfair if they are allowed to get away with it!' So, we are back at this prayer with a clause attached, one we accept whenever we recite the Lord's Prayer! To

start with we must know that this is a command-one from Jesus Christ, the One whom we owe everything to, the One to whom we have professed lifelong obedience. We begin there with the understanding of where we must get to, but how do we get there? As always, firstly in prayer-prayer for the one who has perpetrated the act, prayer for strength to forgive, prayer for God to intervene, prayer for God to give us deeper understanding of that person, prayer to help us to love them, prayer for a solution. I'm sorry, but we cannot demand justice from the God who was killed in innocence, we cannot think that we are more important than the Son of God who willingly accepted injustice in order to see God glorified. And just like Jesus' death on the cross we do not know how God will use what we have been though to bring glory to Him and to enable the spread of the Gospel. We are called to be like Jesus and to forgive as He forgave, to receive supernatural power to forgive when it is not humanly possible!

Please do speak to me or contact me with struggles you may be having.