

The Power of Forgiveness, Mercy, and Love

Genesis 43:1-34

“Just as God in Christ forgave you: Our forgiveness to others is patterned after the forgiveness of Jesus towards us. When we think of the amazing way God forgives us, it is shameful for us to withhold forgiveness from those who have wronged us. God holds back His anger a long time until He forgives. He bears with us for a long time though we sorely provoke Him. God reaches out to bad people to woo them to Himself, and attempts reconciliation with bad people. God always makes the first move in forgiveness, trying to reconcile even though the guilty party is uninterested in forgiveness. God forgives our sin knowing that we will sin again, often in exactly the same way. God’s forgiveness is so complete and glorious that He grants adoption to those former offenders. God, in His forgiveness, bore all of the penalty for the wrong we did against Him. He was innocent yet He bore the guilt. God keeps reaching out to man for reconciliation even when man rejects Him again and again. God requires no probationary period to receive His forgiveness. God’s forgiveness offers complete restoration and honor. He loves, adopts, honors, and associates with those who once wronged Him. God puts His trust in us and invites us to work with Him as co-laborers when He forgives us.” Guzik

“If anyone here who is a Christian finds a difficulty in forgiveness, I am going to give him three words which will help him wonderfully. I would put them into the good man’s mouth. I gave them to you just now, and prayed you to get the sweetness of them; here they are again! ‘For Christ’s sake.’ Cannot you forgive an offender on that ground?” (Spurgeon)

- I. *In this world, broken things are despised and thrown out. Anything we no longer need, we throw away. Damaged goods are rejected, and that includes people. In marriage, when relationships break down, the tendency is to walk away and find someone new rather than work at reconciliation. The world is full of people with broken hearts, broken spirits and broken relationships. “The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit” (Psalm 34:18). There is something about reaching a breaking point that causes us to seek the Lord more sincerely. King David was once a broken man, and he prayed, “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me... The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise” (Psalm 51:10, 17). There are some things in our lives that need to be broken: pride, self-will, stubbornness, and sinful habits, for example. When we feel our brokenness, God compensates: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit” (Isaiah 57:15) gotquestions.org. God had to bring Joseph’s brothers through brokenness so that they could be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work (2 Tim. 2:21).*

Gen. 43:1-15

Matthew 23:12 *Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*

II. The ministry of reconciliation can be defined as having a willingness to take action and follow through with doing what is necessary to bring about peace and forgiveness to a fractured relationship. In the case of Christ, he willingly suffered and sacrificed himself as a sin offering for our sins, so that those who put their trust in him would not only be forgiven but would also be given an eternal peace with God. Forgiveness is a ministry God gives to all believers. In fact, it is not an option but a responsibility that is emphasized time and time again in the Scriptures. Its benefits far outweigh the damage unforgiveness can cause physically, emotionally, and spiritually. That is why Paul writes, *16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:11-12).* Joseph's willingness to forgive his brothers from the heart provided the foundation necessary for God to work in their hearts to get them God centered in their thinking. It shows the power we've been given to change lives through making peace in our hearts with ourselves when sinned against, so that others might benefit from a life set free from the bitterness of unforgiveness.

Gen. 43:16-30

Eph. 4:20-27

Gen. 42:37

Matt. 18:21-22 *Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.*

Colossians 3:13 *Make allowances for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. (NLT)*

Eph. 4:32 *Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

III. Mercy is another theme that runs throughout Joseph's narrative. Grant Hughes writes, *"Mercy is written large over this account from beginning to end. Father Israel's prayer had been answered. Mercy rained down on his sons all the day long. Joseph boiled over with mercy for Benjamin, and hot tears streaked his face. The feast was one of grace and mercy. The celebration went on into the night – "And they drank and were merry with him." The time passed with hilarity and pleasure. Their fears proved groundless."* In the Hebrew, the word defined as mercy, loving kindness, steadfast love is **hesed**. As God's representative, it is what Joseph expressed toward his brothers by not treating them as their sins deserved. Instead, he, through the power of the Holy Spirit, brought about a wonderful healing in his family that forever changed the course of salvation history. Joseph's willingness to show forgiveness, mercy and love kept Satan from gaining a foothold (Eph. 4:26-27) in his attempt to prevent God from fulfilling His covenant promises to Israel and his sons.

Gen. 30:32-34

Ps. 103:10-14