**SERMON OUTLINE**

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| **SERMON TITLE:** | The Freedom of Forgiveness |
| **SERMON REFERENCE:** | Ephesians 4:31-32 |
| **LWF SERMON NUMBER:** | #2422 |
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1. INTRODUCTION
   1. There are two problems that do great psychological, emotional and spiritual damage:
      1. Guilt
         1. Guilt imprisons us.
         2. Guilt is the result of something we’ve done wrong.
      2. Bitterness
         1. Bitterness poisons us.
         2. Bitterness is our reaction to someone else’s wrong, or our perception that someone else has wronged us.
   2. Forgiveness sets us free from both guilt and bitterness.
      1. God’s forgiveness of us sets us free from the prison of guilt.
      2. Our forgiveness of others sets us free from the poison of bitterness.
   3. Ephesians 4:31-32
      1. When we truly forgive another, we set two prisoners free:
         1. The person we have forgiven and ourselves.
   4. To forgive means to pay a debt.
      1. There are no bargain pardons.
         1. Matthew 6:12
      2. Sin is a debt that we owe.
         1. We have sinned against Heaven and have been sued for damages.
         2. It is a debt we cannot pay.
         3. God in mercy and love has forgiven us and paid that debt.
      3. There are no free pardons.
         1. When someone is forgiven, someone else has paid.
      4. The word “forgive” comes from a word that means “to bear the burden.”
         1. To forgive is to pay the debt.
   5. Ephesians 1:7
      1. God paid the debt for us and cancelled that debt.
   6. When we ask the Lord to save us from our sins, He does and places us into His family.
      1. We then begin to forgive others.
         1. We receive mercy, and we show mercy.
      2. If we don’t practice forgiveness, we stop the flow of God’s mercy.
   7. It is impossible to over-emphasize the importance of forgiveness.
      1. When we are saved, it puts us into the family of God.
      2. If we fail to forgive others, then it destroys family fellowship.
2. THE COMPELLING REASONS FOR FORGIVENESS
   1. The grace factor
      1. Ephesians 4:32
      2. We should forgive others when they sin against us because God has forgiven us when we sinned against Him.
         1. God has willingly, lovingly and freely forgiven us.
   2. The guilt factor
      1. Matthew 6:14-15
      2. An unforgiving spirit is unforgivable.
         1. The person who refuses to forgive destroys the bridge over which he must travel.
      3. Forgiving and being forgiven go together.
         1. We are basically praying, “Father, treat me like I am treating them.”
      4. When we chose not to forgive someone, we are essentially saying, “Father, I’m not going to forgive that person, so don’t forgive me.”
         1. We are asking to be forgiven in the same manner as we forgive others.
      5. An unforgiving spirit is not merely us missing a blessing, but it is a wicked, vile sin in the same category as stealing or blasphemy.
         1. God’s nature is to forgive.
         2. An unforgiving spirit is ungodliness.
            1. Matthew 18:23-27

Ten thousand talents was an enormous debt; a talent was the largest measure of money known in the Roman world.

The word “talent” means “without number;” the Bible sometimes translates this word as “myriads.”

The Bible tells us that when Solomon built the temple and overlaid it with gold, that it was 8,000 talents of gold; the man in Matthew 18 owed 10,000 talents.

* + - * 1. Matthew 18:28-30

The man who had been forgiven myriads had someone else who owed him a hundred day’s wages.

In this passage, Jesus speaks of the wickedness of the man who had been forgiven.

* + - * 1. Matthew 18:35

It is wicked for those of us who have been forgiven so much to refuse to forgive someone else.

* + - 1. James 2:13
      2. Matthew 5:7
      3. We need to forgive because we have been forgiven.
         1. Only the person who never sins can afford not to forgive; which is no one.
  1. The grief factor
     1. The man who failed to forgive in Matthew 18 endured the severest discipline.
     2. Hebrews 12:15
        1. The person who does not forgive will know unusual grief and trouble.
        2. If we do not forgive, those around us will also be troubled.
     3. An unforgiving spirit does personal harm.
        1. It’s not what your unforgiveness does to someone else, but what it does to you.
           1. To attempt to get even with someone who has done you harm would be to bring yourself down to their level.
           2. To continue to hate is to commit emotional suicide.

Hate fills you with bitterness, which is an acid that will destroy you as much or more than it does the person on whom it is poured.

* + 1. We sometimes think that forgiveness lets the other person “off the hook;” but when we chose not to forgive, we are on the hook with them.
    2. We need to forgive because of the grief that bitterness and an unforgiving spirit will do to us.
       1. We forgive them for their sake.
       2. We forgive them for Jesus’ sake.
       3. We forgive them for our sake.
  1. The gain factor
     1. Matthew 5:24
        1. If we need to make things right with someone, we should go and be reconciled to our brother or sister before bringing an offering to the Lord.
     2. Matthew 18:15
        1. When we forgive, we heal a broken relationship and gain back a brother or sister.
  2. The effects of unforgiveness:
     1. It disgraces Almighty God.
     2. It discourages the saints.
     3. It drives away the lost.
        1. The greatest evangelistic outreach of any church is the love its members have for one another.
     4. It delights the devil.

1. THE COSTLY REQUIREMENTS OF FORGIVENESS (Ephesians 4:32)
   1. Jesus Christ is the model of our forgiveness, and He paid the price.
      1. We will have to know a little personal Gethsemane and Calvary if we truly forgive someone who has hurt us deeply.
   2. We are to forgive freely.
      1. Jesus’ forgiveness is free, spontaneous and quick.
      2. Don’t wait to forgive.
      3. We should be so eager to forgive a person that we chase them down and catch them in order to forgive them.
         1. We love God because He first loved us.
            1. 1 John 4:19
         2. When Adam and Eve sinned against God in the Garden of Eden, He did not wait on them; God came to the Garden and sought Adam.
      4. Matthew 18:15
         1. We are to go to our brother privately and freely.
      5. Matthew 18:21-22
         1. We are not to keep score; forgiveness has no limit.
   3. We are to forgive fully.
      1. When someone seeks our forgiveness, we are to forgive them totally.
         1. Do not respond, “Don’t worry about it.”
         2. Tell them that you forgive them.
      2. When we do wrong, we should seek the forgiveness of the person we have wronged.
         1. We should not say, “I want to apologize if I hurt your feelings.”
            1. The word “apologize” comes from a Greek word meaning “to make a defense.”

This means that we are actually defending ourselves.

* + - 1. We should ask them to forgive us.
  1. We are to forgive finally.
     1. Do not bring it up again.
        1. Do it finally, once and for all.
     2. Isaiah 43:25
        1. Our sins are buried in the grave of God’s forgetfulness.
           1. Intellectually, God cannot forget.

God does not lose His memory.

* + - 1. God does not bring them up again; He will not use our sins against us.
         1. The sin is buried.
  1. We are to forgive forcefully.
     1. It is not natural to forgive; our spirits demand justice.
     2. We need Jesus to be forgiven, and we need Jesus in order to forgive.
     3. Ephesians 4:32
        1. This kindness and tenderheartedness comes from Jesus.
        2. The one who has forgiven us is the one who puts His Spirit in us and enables us to have the power to forgive.
        3. The power of Jesus Christ, who forgave us, enables us to forgive somebody else.

1. THE RESULTS OF FORGIVENESS
   1. Personal emancipation
      1. When there is forgiveness, there is personal emancipation.
   2. Reconciliation
      1. There will be reconciliation between you and someone else.
      2. We gain a brother or sister.
   3. Spiritual jubilation
      1. There will be revival.
         1. Real revival is not only getting the roof off, but getting the walls down and getting right with God.
2. CONCLUSION
   1. If we have been wronged by someone, we are to forgive that person and bury it in the grave of God’s forgetfulness.
      1. Romans 12:19
   2. How do we forgive someone who has not repented and continues to hurt or wrong us?
      1. God does not forgive without repentance.
      2. If we cannot forgive them due to their continuing practice, we can have the spirit of forgiveness.
         1. Luke 23:34
            1. Jesus prayed for the forgiveness of those who were nailing Him to the cross.
         2. Even though not everyone is saved, Jesus bought salvation for all; all we have to do is receive it.
      3. We can put forgiveness in escrow, waiting for that individual to write the check of repentance and receive the forgiveness.
   3. We do not need to carry around the load and burden of hurt and unforgiveness.
   4. All true forgiveness begins with receiving forgiveness.
   5. You can receive forgiveness today; Jesus Christ died to forgive you.
   6. Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
   7. Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
      1. Romans 3:23
      2. Romans 10:9-10
      3. Romans 10:13
      4. Acts 16:31
      5. John 3:16