**Faith to Forgive**

Sunday School Lesson 1

*Faith in Action*

Luke 17:1-6

5/5/2024

**Introduction:** We are starting a new lesson series today called *Faith in Action.* The Biblical direction of this lesson is to look at the instances where Christ mentioned faith and connect those instances to real-life situations for us. As Christians, we should understand that faith is meant to be active and working in our lives. Our faith in the Lord is not meant to be just a believing knowledge but a believing reliance. We are called to walk by faith. As we put our faith in action, it will help us to grow our faith. Every single one of us possess the potential to increase in faith. None of us have maxed out our measure of faith. The twelve apostles understood their shortcoming when it came to faith. This is why they asked the Lord to increase their faith. We find this request mentioned in Luke 17. This is the passage that we are going to be looking at this morning. In this passage, we see that the message is primarily about forgiveness. We are commanded to forgive a brother who trespasses against us. In fact, we are commanded to forgive such a person seven times in one day if necessary! It was this very command that prompted the disciples to ask the Lord for an increase of faith. They obviously found the Lord’s teaching on forgiveness to be a hard one for them to accept. They trusted the Lord, but His instruction likely seemed to be in great contrast to their culture and understanding of what God wanted from them. They were probably more likely to hold to an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Thankfully, the Lord helped them repeatedly throughout His earthly ministry by setting the example of forgiveness that He had taught.

1. **WE CAN FORGIVE OTHERS BECAUSE WE BELIEVE THAT GOD HAS FORGIVEN US.**

* *Matthew 18:29 And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. 32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Luke 7:49 And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? 1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* The Lord gave us the parable of the unforgiving servant to show us our need to recognize how the Lord has forgiven us. This recognition is essential in order for us to be forgiving like we should be. Consider how many of the Jews struggled to accept that Jesus could forgive them of their sins. They believed that their adherence to the Law justified them before the Lord. Not surprisingly, the Jewish religious leaders were not known as being forgiving. They were self-righteous. They were prideful. They looked down upon the people because they did not believe that they needed forgiveness for themselves. There are also people who struggle to believe that God would truly forgive them of their sins. This usually affects the way that they treat others as well. They typically refuse to let go of what they deem to be weightier offenses committed against them by others.

1. **WE CAN FORGIVE OTHERS BECAUSE WE BELIEVE THAT GOD IS JUST.**

* *Deuteronomy 32:4 He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he. Psalm 82:3 Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. Romans 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. 20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. 21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.* We often struggle to forgive others because we don’t believe that it is just for them to be able to receive forgiveness from us. We feel a strong need to be avenged and for things to be made right. The Lord has called for us to reserve judgment to Him and His mercy and grace. This requires for us to have confidence and faith in the justice of the Lord. The story of Jonah is a great example for us to consider. Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh where the Lord was leading him. He wanted God to destroy them. He knew that God would forgive them if they repented. Jonah did not like or accept God’s justice. Even after Jonah himself had experienced God’s forgiveness of his disobedience in not going, Jonah still became frustrated when the Lord forgave Nineveh. God desires for us to trust that He is the Just One. He gives man many opportunities to get right, but He is no respecter of persons. When we accept that God has the situation taken care of, we can forgive and move on without worrying about whether forgiveness should truly be given or not. Ultimately, that person will stand before the Lord.

1. **WE CAN FORGIVE OTHERS BECAUSE WE BELIEVE THAT GOD UNDERSTANDS US AND KNOWS WHAT IS BEST FOR US.**

* *Hebrews 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Luke 4:18a The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, Hebrews 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;* We struggle to forgive because we are afraid to let go of that satisfying feeling of anger that we feel inside when someone has hurt us. Our wounded spirit makes us think that the only way forward is to carry the pain of the wound. We are too afraid to let forgiveness cauterize the wound. We are afraid of emptiness, but we fail to realize how empty our feelings of anger and frustration really are. They are passionate emotions, but they do not do well for our spirit. Even the care givers of this secular world recognize the damage that anger and resentment cause to a person’s health. Of course, God knows us better than any person in this world. He knows what we need. He knows that forgiveness is for us. It helps us to avoid the very dangerous root of bitterness that can eat away at us and significantly alter our spirit. We must trust that the Lord knows what is best for us.

1. **WE CAN FORGIVE OTHERS BECAUSE WE BELIEVE IN GOD’S WAY OF RECONCILIATION.**

* *2 Corinthians 5:18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? 2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? 3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?* Many people struggle with forgiveness because they don’t believe it to be the best way to bring about reconciliation. They are afraid that forgiveness is going to lead to them being taken advantage of without any type of recourse. Instead, they choose to implement a works-based path of reconciliation. If a person does enough to earn their forgiveness, then they may consider giving it. The problem with this is that it often sets an unattainable and unrealistic bar of expectation. Ultimately, that person becomes implacable because no one can ever live up to their standards, and they can’t trust anybody or anything. We can forgive because we trust God’s way as the best way for reconciliation. Grace and mercy has a profound effect on people. There is a sense of gratitude and thankfulness when forgiveness is given without expectation of earning it from the other party.

1. **WE CAN FORGIVE OTHERS BECAUSE WE BELIEVE IN GOD’S POWER TO ENABLE US TO PERFORM TASKS THAT ARE SEEMINGLY DIFFICULT.**

* *Luke 17:7 But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? 8 And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? 9 Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. 10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do. 1 Thessalonians 5:24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.* The disciples asked for an increase of faith from the Lord because they believed that the idea of forgiving someone that many times in one day was very difficult or perhaps even impossible. It’s likely that they did not believe that they could do what He was asking them to do. In their thinking, only a great person could do that which the Lord asked of them. The Lord then proceeds to give them the analogy of a servant who simply did what he was asked to do. There is nothing particularly special about doing what you are told to do. You trust that if the Master says you need to do, then He will equip you with the ability to do it. Some struggle to forgive because they do not believe that they can. The Lord would not ask it of us if we could not do it.