



“Forgiveness as a Barometer of Faith” (Matthew 6:12–15)(8.6.23)

Matthew 6:12-15 Amplified Bible

12

‘And forgive us our ^[a]debts, as we have forgiven our debtors [letting go of both the wrong and the resentment].

13

‘And do not ^[b]lead us into temptation, but deliver us from ^[c]evil. ^[d][For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]’

14 For if you forgive ^[e]others their trespasses [their reckless and willful sins], your heavenly Father will also forgive you. **15** But if you do not forgive others [nurturing your hurt and anger with the result that it interferes with your relationship with God], then your Father will not forgive your trespasses.

The word of God for the people of God. LET US PRAY.



Title: **“Forgiveness as a Barometer of Faith”**

INTRODUCTION:

Most likely, you recognize the 12th & 13th verses as the end of the Lord’s Prayer. And of course, it is called the Lord’s Prayer because Jesus gave it to His disciples as a model prayer.

The poet, Alexander Pope was not a pastor or preacher but no doubt you have heard his quote, "To err is human, to forgive divine." Last week, in our examination of Colossians chapter two, we learned that Christians have been made complete in Jesus Christ. We have been given fullness in Him. This compels us to forgive as we have been forgiven.

In today's text, the 14th & 15th verses drive home the crucial place of forgiveness in the Christian Community. After all, it is the rule of God's kingdom. It is foundational to our faith.

BODY:



A barometer measures atmospheric pressure. Variations in this pressure determine wind and storm patterns on the earth. Barometers have been around almost 400 years now and are very reliable in predicting short-

term weather events. You can see on this picture that besides giving the numbers for the atmosphere's pressure, it gives the weather forecast.

Because the barometer has been around so long now, and they are so reliable. The term has become part of the modern vernacular. Something that indicates fluctuations such as in public opinion could be called a barometer. It has become a common metaphor of measuring and prediction.

Hence, the title for today's message. My premise is that the degree to which we exercise forgiveness can forecast

patterns in our lives. When forgiveness is lacking, it can result in stormy weather. When forgiveness is exercised fully, fair winds and traveling seas are predicted. {pause}

There was a certain man. He had a son who had been married about ten years. After a couple of turbulent years the marriage ended in divorce. While few divorces are completely one-sided, this one was largely due to decisions and infidelities on the part of the daughter-in-law. And, during the settlement, the son made some serious concessions in order to keep the peace.

It was a painful and tearful process for the son. He knew he needed help and he sought that help at a Divorce Care program at a large church near him. This was a critical step in his getting serious about his faith walk. He got more and more involved at the church, with life-groups, bible study, giving, and worship attendance. The son committed his life to the Lord.

He shared custody of their young daughter. He did his best to cooperate with his ex-wife and her new husband. Sometimes there were minor conflicts but they were able to work through them. He reached a point where he no longer harbored ill feelings towards his ex-wife. He had forgiven her.

Not so for this certain man. He knew he was supposed to forgive her. He tried to forgive her. He thought, at times, that he had forgiven her. But, he had not.

This certain man knew today's scripture; that he would be forgiven in the same way he forgave. Who knew how

many times he had prayed this in the Lord's Prayer. This was troubling indeed. These were Jesus' very own words.

This certain man also knew Matthew 5:43–47 (NIV84)

⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?

This certain man had followed this teaching in other situations. He had sincerely prayed for those with whom he had been in conflict. They certainly needed to be prayed for and praying for our enemies changes our heart towards them.

Probably on three different occasions, he had prayed for his ex-daughter-in-law over different durations. It helped, but it was short-lived. In his mind he had forgiven her, but unfortunately not so in his heart. He found himself thinking negative thoughts and he had stopped praying for her.

What had happened is that he had given Satan a beachhead and Satan developed it into a stronghold. Satan often whispered: your anger is righteous because it is on behalf of your son; of course, your behavior is natural and justified. Then in any instance where this

certain man could find fault in the ex-daughter-in-law's behavior or actions, the Devil would shout, "See, see, you were right."

The author of Hebrews warns us, Hebrews 12:15 (NIV84) See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

That bitter root can break rocks. It can crack foundations. It has destroyed marriages. It has broken business partnerships. A bitter root leaves a terrible taste in everyone's mouth. It has undermined churches.

Here is the crucial tragedy for our certain man. Through his son's marriage, there are two granddaughters. Whenever those granddaughters do anything that remind him of their mother...there is an acid reflux of that bitter root that has taken hold. Surely, unless he changes course, he will shipwreck on the stormy seas to come.



Luke 6:37 (NIV84) **"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.**

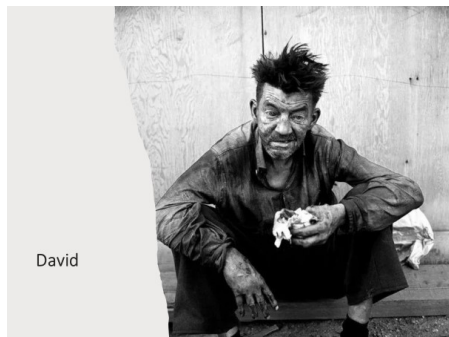
Ephesians 4:32 (NIV84) Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Colossians 3:13 (NIV84) Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.



Now, a barometric altimeter uses an atmospheric pressure reading to determine altitude. I have installed or replaced them during my career in Coast Guard Aviation. At the beginning of each flight, the pilots set it for that day's sea-level reading. Then it gives you your altitude as you fly along. Altitude is critical to aircraft safety 😊

For this metaphor, I say to you that the higher your forgiveness the more heavenly is your flight. The lower your forgiveness the more likely you are to run into one of those cliffs or a microwave tower.



Let me introduce you to a man named David. David's father was an alcoholic. David's grandfather was an alcoholic. David was adamant this would never happen to him. But, he had a serious business setback creating a crippling financial crisis for his family.

David did find a good job, but the hours were long and the stress was high. He began to have a drink to take the edge off before he went home. You are already ahead of me. Yes, one drink led to another.

David loved his wife and he loved his children. The long work hours, extended by his drinking, created a strain at home. The strain at home compounded with what was

happening at work. His performance at work began to slide. The out-of-control spiral began.

To make a long story short, David's life unraveled. Lies at home. Lies at work. Relationships deteriorated. Trust was broken. David began to isolate himself, turning ever more inward, as he clung to that bottle. Shame overcame him. He left his home, his wife, and his children. David's wife prayed. What happened to David?

Pastor Jim preaches at a church in the slums of New York. He tells the following story:

It was Easter Sunday, and I was so tired at the end of the day that I just went to the edge of the platform, pulled down my tie and sat down and draped my feet over the edge. It was a wonderful service with many people coming forward. The counselors were talking with these people.

As I was sitting there, I looked up the middle aisle, and there in about the third row was a man who looked about fifty, disheveled, filthy. He looked up at me rather sheepishly, as if saying, "Could I talk to you?" We have homeless people coming in all the time, asking for money or whatever. So, as I sat there, I said to myself, though I am ashamed of it, "What a way to end a Sunday. I've had such a good time, preaching and ministering, and here's a fellow probably wanting some money for more wine."

He walked up. When he got within about five feet of me, I smelled a horrible smell like I'd never smelled in my life. It was so awful that when he got close, I would

inhale by looking away, and then I'd talk to him, and then look away to inhale, because I couldn't inhale facing him.

I asked him, "What's your name?" "David." "How long have you been on the street?" "Six years." "How old are you?" "Thirty-two." He looked fifty—hair matted, front teeth missing, wino, eyes slightly glazed. "Where did you sleep last night, David?" "Abandoned truck."

I keep in my back pocket a money clip that also holds some credit cards. I fumbled to pick one out thinking, I'll give him some money.

I won't even get a volunteer. They are all busy talking with others. Usually we don't give money to people; we take them to get something to eat. I took the money out. David pushed his finger in front of me. He said, "I don't want your money. I want this Jesus, the One you were talking about, because I'm not going to make it.

I'm going to die on the street."

I completely forgot about David, and I started to weep for myself. I was going to give a couple of dollars to someone God had sent to me. See how easy it is? I could make the excuse I was tired. There is no excuse. I was not seeing him the way God sees him. I was not feeling what God feels.

But oh, did that change! David just stood there. He didn't know what was happening. I pleaded with God, "God, forgive me! Forgive me! Please forgive me. I am so sorry to represent You this way. I'm so sorry. Here I am with

my message and my points, and You send somebody and I am not ready for it. Oh, God!”

Something came over me. Suddenly I started to weep deeper, and David began to weep. He fell against my chest as I was sitting there. He fell against my white shirt and tie, and I put my arms around him, and there we wept on each other. The smell of His person became a beautiful aroma. Here is what I thought the Lord made real to me: If you don't love this smell, I can't use you, because this is why I called you where you are. This is what you are about. You are about this smell.

Christ changed David's life. He started memorizing portions of Scripture that were incredible. We got him a place to live. We hired him in the church to do maintenance, and we got his teeth fixed.

He was a handsome man when he came out of the hospital. They detoxed him in 6 days.

He spent that Thanksgiving at my house. He also spent Christmas at my house. When we were exchanging presents, he pulled out a little thing, and he said, “This is for you.” It was a little white hanky. It was the only thing he could afford.

A year later, David got up and talked about his conversion to Christ. The minute he took the mic and began to speak, I said, “The man is a preacher.” This past Easter, we ordained David. He is an associate minister of a church over in New Jersey.

And I was so close to saying, "Here, take this; I'm a busy preacher." We can get so full of ourselves.

Lord, thank you for sending others our way. May we never stop seeing them as Your precious children no matter how busy or tired we become. Amen.

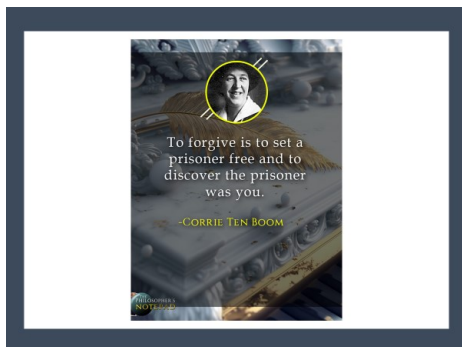
Surely you can see that David has been the recipient of God's grace and forgiveness. Now, David is a champion and preacher of God's forgiveness and redemption.

CONCLUSION:



Today my friends, I confess to you that I am that certain man of whom I spoke. I repent of the sin of unforgiveness. May God the Holy Spirit empower me to be steadfast and faithful to pray for my ex-

daughter-in-law. Lord Jesus, unearth this root of bitterness in my heart and destroy the stronghold of Satan. Jesus, while you hung from that Calvary Cross, bleeding and dying, you said, "Father forgive them." How can we do anything less?



Last week, I reenacted Jesus nailing our Certificate of Debt to the cross upon which he paid our penalty. He paid it all. Let us prepare our hearts to celebrate Holy Communion in remembrance of His sacrifice.

Amen and amen. Let us pray.