

Introduction

How many of you saw the news this week about Donald Trump and forgiveness. In an interview that he had with Frank Luntz at CNN, Donald said he had “never sought forgiveness for his sins.” He went on to say, “I just go on and try to do a better job from there. If I do something wrong, I just try and make it right. I don’t bring God into that picture. I don’t.”

(CNN)Donald Trump talked about his Christian faith Saturday, but said he's never sought forgiveness for his sins. Moderator Frank Luntz asked Trump whether he has ever asked God for forgiveness for his actions. "I am not sure I have. I just go on and try to do a better job from there. I don't think so," he said. "I think if I do something wrong, I think, I just try and make it right. I don't bring God into that picture. I don't."

Many people, like Donald Trump, do not have an understanding on their need for forgiveness. People do not understand the consequences of our sins against God and against one another. This morning I want to talk about forgiveness. I will be looking at Man’s Need for Forgiveness, God’s Plan of Forgiveness, Man’s Responsibility, and God’s Response. This is our sixth message in the Essentials series. We have looked at Essential Doctrines, Essentials for Growth and Maturity, Essentials for Service, and Essentials for Relationships: Offenses. This is the sequel to the message on Offenses. All of these messages have to do with our relationship with God and with one another. God has called us to be a church that loves God with all our heart, a church that fervently loves one another from a pure heart, and a church that reaches out to our community with the love of God.

1. Man’s Need for Forgiveness
2. God’s Plan of Forgiveness
3. Man’s Responsibility
4. God’s Response

1. Man’s Need for Forgiveness

Unfortunately, the Scriptures tell us that **our sins separate us from God**. God is a holy God, and sin cannot come into His presence. A few years ago we lost our internet and phone service at our office. We called Comcast and they sent out a technician. The problem was easy to find and correct. Someone had cut the cable where it entered into our building. The technician put a new line in from the cable junction box outside to our building, and then we had our communication restored. Sin is like that broken cable line. Once a person has sinned, he is separated from a holy God.

(Isaiah 59:2) “But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.”

David understood that sin separates us from God. (See 2 Samuel 11.) After he had sinned by going into Bathsheba and killing her husband, Uriah the Hittite, Nathan approached David about his sins. David repented and prayed, “against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight.” How can David say it was only against God that he sinned and did what was evil. Did he not sin against Bathsheba? Did he not sin by having Uriah the Hittite put to death in battle? Yes. But the main point is that **all of our sins are ultimately against God**. When we sin against someone, we also sin against God. Our sins separate us from God, and they separate us from one another. We have a need to receive forgiveness from God for our sins.

(Psalm 51:4) “Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge.”

Notice that Isaiah also says that our sins have hidden His face from us so that He does not hear. Sin not only separates us from God, but it hinders our communication with God. I would say that sin separates us from one another, and it hinders the communication that we have with one another. James tells us that sin does more than separate us; **sin brings forth death**. There are stages in sin. James says that it begins with lust. A person is tempted and carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then lust conceives and gives birth to sin. When sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. It is a process with many different stages. The word for brings forth is tikto, which means to bring forth from seed, as in a plant. Most events in life happen in stages. For example, a plant slowly grows and goes through stages. It begins as a seed. It is planted and then it sprouts. It grows up and puts on leaves. It flowers and then begins to bear fruit. After the fruit, it begins to dry up and die.

(James 1:14-15) “But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. {15} Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.”

Sin has a goal; it is death. When sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. In Romans 3, Paul wrote all of us have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God. Man has been separated from the glory of a holy God. In Romans 6, he tells us that the wages of our sin is death. All of us have sinned, and that sin brings forth death. All of us have a need to ask God for forgiveness for our sins. We cannot simply do better the next time or try and fix our mistakes. Our sins have separated us from God and they bring forth death. We need to be forgiven and cleansed of our sins.

(Rom 3:23) “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

(Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

James tells us that death from sin is not usually immediate, but it develops and grows like a plant until it brings forth its ultimate goal of death. In the beginning, God told Adam and Eve that they could eat from any tree except the knowledge of good and evil. If they ate from that tree they would surely die. When Adam and Eve sinned and ate the forbidden fruit, they did not experience immediate physical death. They did experience separation from God. There was a breach in their relationship. They were separated from the glory of God, and they tried to hide from God. Eventually, they experienced physical death, but it was not immediate.

In Psalm 32, David gives us an in depth look at sin and its consequences. He said, “when I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away.” He added, “my vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer.” **There are emotional and physical consequences for our sins**. The final result is death, but there are warning signs about our sin to alert us that there is a problem.

(Psalm 32:1-11) “When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. {4} For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah.”

God does not want us to keep silent about our sin and have the consequences come upon us. David uses two different illustrations to convey our need to ask God for forgiveness. The first illustration is of a flood. He tells us to pray while God can be found, In a flood of great waters, they will not reach Him. He is telling us to get to safety before the flood comes. He is telling us to confess our sins and receive forgiveness while we have time.

(Psalm 32:6) “Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found; Surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him.”

The second picture is of a horse or mule. He says that a horse or mule needs trappings like a bit and bridle, to hold them in check. Without the trappings the horse or mule does whatever they want. However, with a bit or bridle, you can make the horse go where you want him to. God does not want to bring consequences into our lives in order to make us come to Him. He does not want us to remain silent and have our vitality drained from us. He does not want our fellowship broken. God wants us to come to Him and receive forgiveness for our sins. He wants us to come on our own accord and confess our sins.

(Psalm 32:9) “Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, Whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, otherwise they will not come near to you.”

2. God’s Plan of Forgiveness

A number of years ago I had a house built for on our property in Georgia. As it was being built, I observed the sequence of everything. Before the foundation of the house was poured, the site was prepared. Then the plumbing company came in and put all the plumbing or septic lines that were to go under the slab. They covered up the pipes and left stubs coming up out of the ground which they would connect the rest of the pipes to after the house was framed. Then, and only after this was done, could the slab be poured. After the slab was poured, the house was framed. Then, before the drywall was put up, the electric, HVAC and the plumbing have to be put in. They are built into the structure of the house. They will not be seen when the walls are put up, but they will be working invisibly in the background.

God had a plumbing plan for our lives before anything else got built. He designed a plumbing system to take care of the waste products in our lives, our sins, and to bring times of refreshing in our lives. In Peter’s sermon at Pentecost, he told the Jews, “this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God...” **God knew that we would sin, and He had a plan to take away the sins of the world.** It was to send His Son as a sacrificial lamb and atone for our sins.

(Acts 2:23) “this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.”

God created us to have fellowship with us. He has gone to great lengths to make provision for our sins. When Adam and Eve sinned, He clothed them with the skin of an animal. Our sins required innocent blood, and an animal was sacrificed to cover their sins. It was a prophetic picture of what Jesus would ultimately do for us.

(Gen 3:21) “The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.”

Later on, the Jews celebrated the Passover with a sacrificial lamb. The blood of the lamb was put on their doorposts and the angel of death passed over the house. The blood was a covering for their sins. It was another prophetic picture of what Jesus would do for us. When Jesus came, John said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

(John 1:29) "The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

The Scriptures teach us that **all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness**. We cannot forgive ourselves. It takes innocent blood to atone for our sins. It took the blood of Christ. We must receive His forgiveness for our sins. It is His blood that cleanses us from our sins.

(Heb 9:22) "And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."

I like how Isaiah prophesied about the plan. He said, "all of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him."

(Isaiah 53:6) "All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him."

Why did the Lord do that for us? He did it because He loves us and wants fellowship with us. John tells us that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

(John 3:16) "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

Paul says the same thing in a different way. He said, "but God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." God had a plan from the beginning. **God's plan of forgiveness was motivated by love**. It was a demonstration of love. God's plan was to forgive us of our sins and to restore our relationship with Him. He did not force this on us. He gave us a choice. As many as received Christ and His payment for our sins, He gave the right to become children of His. We have to believe in Christ and receive Him into our lives. We have to receive His payment for our sins. We have to receive His forgiveness in our lives.

(Rom 5:8) "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

What is the key to forgiveness? It is love. It was the love of God that sent His Son to die for us. It was the love of Christ that made Him willing to lay His life down for us. It is the love of God in us that allows us to forgive others when they have sinned against us. We need to receive God's love, and we need to abide in His love. Peter tells us to fervently love one another because love covers a multitude of sins. Paul taught that love does not take into account a wrong suffered. It is love that helps us forgive one another. Love is the key to forgiveness.

(1 Pet 4:8) “Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.”

(1 Cor 13:5) “does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,”

3. Man’s Responsibilities

We have some responsibilities in the area of forgiveness. We will look at three of these responsibilities. We must seek forgiveness from God. Second, we must seek forgiveness from others. Third, we must give forgiveness to others.

A. Forgiveness From God

We saw that ultimately every sin that has been committed is against God. Therefore, **our first action is to ask God for His forgiveness.** In the Lord's prayer, we ask God to forgive us for our trespasses. We do this on an “as need” basis. We may need to ask Him once a day. We may need to ask Him one hundred times a day.

(Luke 11:4) "And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.""

When we sin, we need to acknowledge and confess our sins to the Lord. In 1 John 1:9 we confess our sins before God and He forgives and cleanses us from all unrighteousness. When we sin, it is always against God.

(1 John 1:9) “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

John goes on to say that if we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. The truth is that we have all sinned, and continue to miss the mark. We continue to have a need to acknowledge our sins to God. Our first responsibility is to confess our sins to the Lord and ask Him to receive forgiveness from Him.

(1 John 1:10) “If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.”

I have heard it said that we must forgive ourselves. I believe that we must receive forgiveness for ourselves. Forgiveness comes from God. It was Jesus’ innocent blood that atoned for my sins. He is the one that forgives. But, many people live under guilt, condemnation, and shame even after they have confessed their sins. **We need to receive God’s forgiveness for our sins.** He has already paid the price. He has forgiven us of our sins, and we need to stand on His promise of forgiveness.

Stand on His promises of forgiveness. Memorize 1 John 1:9. Memorize Psalm 103:3. Memorize 2 Corinthians 5:21. Memorize Isaiah 1:18. Memorize Romans 8:1-2. When the guilt and condemnation come at you, stand firm on the word of God. Thank the Lord for forgiving you of all your sins, past, present, and future. Thank the Lord that He has removed your sins from you as far as the east is from the west. Thank the Lord that He has cleansed you. Thank the Lord that He has

made you righteous. Thank the Lord that there is therefore now no condemnation on your life. Stand firm on His word and His promises.

Confess your righteousness. We need to see ourselves as God sees us. We need to confess that we are saints. Confess that you are the righteousness of God in Christ. Confess that you have been made whiter than snow. Confess that you have been cleansed. Confess that you are a saint, a holy one. We need to see ourselves as God sees us.

B. Forgiveness from others

The second area of forgiveness is to go to the one we have sinned against. I have found that the sooner that I go to my brother the less infection begins to set in. I have found that my own walk with the Lord is less hindered. I have found that I have internal peace with the Lord and with myself when my lines are not clogged up with sin. For me, it is a necessary principle.

How do we go to our brother and ask for forgiveness? First, we must humble ourselves and go. Pride keeps us from admitting that we are wrong and have sinned against that person. Pride keeps us from asking the person to forgive us. We must humble ourselves and go to the person.

Then, **we must confess our sins to them with a contrite heart.** We need to ask them to forgive us for our sins. We should be specific and not general. No one appreciates it when we gloss over our wrongs. We need to be somber and contrite when we confess our sins. If we smile or laugh when we confess our sins, it shows insincerity. We must be sincere about our repentance.

One night I had a dream about a man that had caused me much harm and grief in my first church plant. In the dream, I saw the man coming to our house. The man was living in Orlando, and I was living in Atlanta, but I saw him come to our front door and ask to speak with me. I saw that my attitude was not holy and blameless. I was ready to shoot the man. Then, I woke up. The Lord dealt with me about my attitude about this man, and then said that the man was coming to ask me for forgiveness. I needed to get my heart right before he came. Sure enough, this man came by our house in a couple of days and asked to speak with me privately. We went into my office, which was next door to my house, and he apologized. He had been going through some personal ministry times, and he was told that he needed to go apologize to me. He used a broad paint stroke and swept over all his sins in one big swoop, and asked for forgiveness. There were so many incidents and I felt a little bit shorted by his request for forgiveness. For him, he had driven five hundred miles to see me, and had another five hundred miles to go back home. He was not insincere at all. He was asking me for forgiveness the best way he knew how. My point is that we should not gloss over our actions. It is helpful to ask forgiveness for the specific things that we have done, rather than lump them up into one request for all the things that we have done wrong.

I have found that it helps to ask forgiveness for the pain and sorrow that our actions have caused them. Ask forgiveness not just for the sin, but for the consequences of your sins that have impacted their lives.

Bring forth the fruit of repentance. If you damaged something of theirs, restore or replace it. If you stole something from them, return it. Notice Zaccheus' attitude towards those that he had cheated. He said, "if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much." Can you

imagine being one of the many people that Zaccheus had cheated. When he came to them and asked forgiveness, he came with four times as much money as he had defrauded them of. They saw the fruit of repentance. They saw the sincerity of repentance.

(Luke 19:8) "Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, 'Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.'"

If the person will let you, pray with them. In your prayer, ask God to forgive you for the sins. Ask God to help you turn away from your sins. Ask God to restore your relationship with the person.

C. Forgiveness for others

The third area of forgiveness is to forgive others who have sinned against us. When Jesus is teaching the disciples how to pray in Matthew 6, He tells them to pray in this manner. "Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors."

(Matt 6:12) "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

We must forgive our brother no matter how often he sins against us. Peter asked the Lord in Matthew 18 about how many times he had to forgive his brother when he sinned against him. The Lord tells him that he must forgive him seventy times seven which means unlimited.

(Matt 18:21-22) "Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" {22} Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

Jesus goes on to give an account of an unrighteous steward who got forgiveness but did not in turn forgive those who owed him debts. The master heard about it and turned him over to the torturers. Many people are tortured because the septic lines in their house are clogged up with the sins of others. We need to forgive our brothers and clean out our septic lines. We open ourselves up to the demonic realm when we harbor bitterness and unforgiveness towards our brothers. God wants us free, and for us to walk in freedom, we must be quick to forgive our neighbors.

(Matt 18:32-35) "Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. {33} 'Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?' {34} "And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. {35} "My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."

When we forgive others, it is important to release them from that sin. We are not to keep that sin in the closet, ready to remind them of it the next time they do something. We must forgive and forget it. The Scriptures say that "he who repeats a matters separates intimate friends." Husbands and wives, this is an important principle. Don't keep bringing up old matters that have been dealt with. If they are not dealt with properly, re-address the issue with the person. If it can't be resolved privately, follow Matthew 18 and get a mature person in the Lord to help you get it resolved.

(Pro 17:9) "He who covers a transgression seeks love, But he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends."

(Matt 18:15-16) ""And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. {16} "But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED."

4. God's Response

When we ask God to forgive us, He forgives us. In 1 John 1:9, God tells us that when we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. That is wonderful news. God forgives and cleanses us.

(1 John 1:9) "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

There is a permanent deletion of our sins from our file. There is no longer any remembrance of our sins. In Psalm 103, David writes that God has removed our transgressions as far as the east is from the west. The east never meets the west. Our sins have been permanently removed.

(Ps 103:12) "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."

In Isaiah, God tells us that though our sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; they they are red like crimson, they will be like wool." When we have big snowstorms and everything is covered with white, there are two things that I am reminded of. First, I give thanks for the moisture. We need the snow, and I am very grateful when it snows. Second, I am reminded of this verse in Isaiah. My life is pure like the white snow. God has cleansed me of my sin and made me white as snow. I thank the Lord for His forgiveness in my life.

(Is 1:18) "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool."

Probably the best example of how God looks at forgiveness is in the introduction to Philippians. Paul addressed his letter "to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi." Saints are holy ones. The Greek word of saint is hagios, which literally means a holy one. The root word is hagnos, which means clean, innocent, modest, perfect, chaste, or pure. The proper way to address one another is as a holy one or saint. Notice that he does not address this to the sinners who are in Philippi. God looks at us as saints. Those who have received Christ, have been forgiven. Their sins have been washed by the blood of Christ and we are now holy ones. **God no longer sees us as sinners. He has forgiven us, and refers to us as saints or holy ones.**

(Phil 1:1) Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons.

G40. hagios, hag'-ee-os; from hagos (an awful thing) [comp. G53, H2282]; sacred (phys. pure, mor. blameless or religious, cer. consecrated):--(most) holy (one, thing), saint. [G53. hagnos; from the same as G40; prop. clean, innocent, modest, perfect:--chaste, clean, pure.]

Conclusion

As we come to a close, I want to go back to Psalm 32:1. David said, “how blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit!” God does not want us living under the consequences of sin. He does not want us weighed down with the burden of sin. God wants to cover our sins. He wants to forgive our sins. He wants to bless His people.

(Psalm 32:1-2) “How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered! {2} How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit!”

If you would like to receive God’s blessing of forgiveness, let me encourage you to confess your sins to the Lord and ask for forgiveness. Do not let your sins separate you from God. Do not let your sins separate you from God’s blessing on your life. If you have not received Christ into your life, let me encourage you to respond today. Repent and receive Christ into your life. Give up control and let Jesus be Lord of your life. Let Him wipe away your sins, cleanse your heart and clean out your plumbing system.

There may be others that have received Christ into their lives, but there are unconfessed sins in your life. Confession simply means to acknowledge your sins. God already knows about the sins. Confess your sins to the Lord and allow Him to cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

If you need forgiveness from someone that you have offended, let me encourage you to go to that person. They may not be here this morning. That is okay. Purpose in your heart to go to that person and ask for forgiveness.

There may be others today that have been offended. Jesus told us that we are to forgive others just as Christ as forgiven us. Therefore, do not hold on to the offenses of others. Forgive them. Talk to the Lord and release those people from their sins. It will free you, and God wants you to walk in freedom.

Let’s pray.

Introduction**1. Man's Need for Forgiveness**

- Our sins _____ us from God. (Is 59:2)
- All of our sins are ultimately against _____. (Ps 51:4)
- Sin brings forth _____. (James 1:14-15, Rom 3:23, 6:23)
- There are emotional and physical consequences to our _____. (Ps 32:1-11)

2. God's Plan of Forgiveness

- God knew that we would sin, and He had a _____ to take away the sins of the world. (Acts 2:23, Gen 3:21, John 1:29)
- All things are cleansed with _____, and without shedding of _____ there is no forgiveness. (Heb 9:22)
- God's plan of forgiveness was motivated by _____. (John 3:16, Rom 5:8, 1 Pet 4:8, 1 Cor 13:5)

3. Man's Responsibilities**A. Forgiveness From God**

- We need to ask _____ for His forgiveness. (Luke 11:4, 1 John 1:9-10)
- We need to _____ God's forgiveness for our sins.
- We need to stand on His _____ of forgiveness. (1 John 1:9, Ps 103:3, 2 Cor 5:21, Is 1:18, Rom 8:1-2)
- Confess your _____. (Phil 1:1-2)

B. Forgiveness from others

- We need to _____ to the one we have sinned against.
- We must confess our sins to them with a _____ heart.
- Bring forth the _____ of repentance. (Luke 19:8)

C. Forgiveness for others

- We need to forgive _____ who have sinned against us. (Matt 6:12, 18:21-22, 32-35)
- When we forgive others, it is important to _____ them from that sin. (Pro 17:9, Matt 18:15-16)

4. God's Response

- When we ask God to forgive us, He _____. (1 John 1:9)
- There is a _____ deletion of our sins from our file. (Ps 103:12, Is 1:18, Phil 1:1)

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