



## We believe in Forgiveness

## Matthew 9 v 1 to 3

It's not always easy. When someone does something to hurt you or speaks about you in a cruel and, maybe untruthful way, your first reaction is revenge. If we go down that route, the situation soon escalates. So, do we just accept it when people damage us? As we have done so often in this series, we need to look at what Jesus teaches us.

But first let's look at how easy we find forgiveness.

What do we find hard to forgive?

Is there such a thing as easy forgiveness?

In the passage in Matthew 9 (read it if you haven't already) Jesus has just left the Sea of Galilee – he demonstrates his authority over the realm of nature by stilling the storm. Here he demonstrates his power over Satan's domain of disease and illness. And perhaps more astonishingly over sin. He tells the paralytic 'Your sins are forgiven' – this is a parallel story of the friends who brought a sick man to Jesus and lowered him through a hole in the roof. (Mark 2 v 1 to 12).

Why would the act of forgiving sin cause the teachers of the law to respond with such anger?

How has he offended them?

How would a 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish person have their sin forgiven?

It is easy to draw wrong conclusions from this miracle. The fact that Jesus saw a sick man and initially offered to forgive his sin might suggest that his sickness was the direct consequence of his sin. The Bible does connect sickness and disease with sin but not always with a direct causal connection. The entrance of sin into the world brought corruption and death. Nowhere is it suggested that sin is always the direct cause of an individual's illness.

Would you rather know that your sins are forgiven or that you are physically well?

We need to understand the forgiveness that Jesus gives us. Look at these verses

***'For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more' (Hebrews 8:12)***

***'But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence' (1 John 2:2)***

We are sinful people – we cannot approach a holy God – Jesus' sacrifice on the cross means that our sins are forgiven if we trust in him – we can approach God – in fact we will spend eternity with him.

Do we really live as if our sins are forgiven – that our slate is wiped clean whenever we ask for forgiveness? (1 John 2:2)

Do we still allow the guilt of sin to be a burden?

Read 1 John 1 v 8 to 10

Perhaps a good time to pray together and thank God for his complete and undeserved forgiveness.

We might say that we find forgiving quite hard particularly when we have been really hurt or damaged. We need to remember what Jesus did for us. Not only is Jesus' forgiveness life saving it gives us a pattern for our own lives. It is also conditional. In a passage about loving our enemies, Jesus says

***'Forgive and you will be forgiven'*** Luke 6:37

Does this mean that forgiving others is a command from God?

What are the consequences if we fail to forgive someone who has wronged us?

However, if you're feeling guilty, there appears to be a link in the scriptures between forgiveness and repentance. Forgiveness is triggered by repentance – take a look at some of these verses.

Mark 1:4

Luke 3:3

Luke 13:3

Luke 17:3 & 4

Luke 24:47

Acts 2:38

Acts 3:19

Acts 5:31

Acts 8:22

1 John 1:9

Luke 17:3 & 4 is quite explicit. We are to 'rebuke' our brother and, if he repents, we should forgive him.

Does this mean that forgiveness is conditional?

What do we do if the one who has hurt us shows no sign of repentance?

Some of us will be carrying deep scars from situations in our past that have done us damage. We may want to forgive but still feel anger when we think about it. But we don't forgive because we are loving and forgiving people, we forgive because we've been loved and forgiven (Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13). Forgiveness doesn't allow us to say that we love God but hate one another

***'If anyone says, 'I love God' and hates his brother, he is liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen'*** 1 John 4:20 to 21

We want to make peace with our brother

We **fight** peace by retaliating

We **fake** peace by burying (denying) our emotional distress

We **make** peace by trusting in the Prince of Peace who moves us to restoration because he has control of our lives.

Which of these are you most likely to do?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:18 to 20

Our new life in Jesus doesn't ask, ***Why must I forgive?***

But, ***How can I display the beauty and reality of Jesus?***

***Let's pray and ask God to give us the strength to display the beauty of Jesus in our relationships.***

***'Then Peter came to Jesus and asked. 'Lord how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?***

***Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times but seventy-seven times'*** Matthew 18:21 and 22

***And you don't stop counting at 77 !!!!!!!!!!!!!***