

EPHESIANS 1:7b  
The Wonderful Work of Salvation  
Message 16, May 16, 1999

INTRO: Several years ago a young man by name of Michael Carneal entered a school in Kentucky and shot three teenaged girls. Well, by now we're getting a little accustomed to students shooting students and teachers. Now we've had the shooting in Colorado, followed shortly thereafter by a shooting in our own traditional and conservative province of Alberta. But what is interesting is the response of the young people in the Kentucky school. I quote from the Alberta Report of July 6, 1998, "Their (the three teenage girls) schoolmates hung out a banner emblazoned, 'We forgive you, Mike.'..."

There is a modern view of forgiveness which Alberta Report claims was bred in the hippy generation of the 60's. The Byfields give another example of this kind of forgiveness. Timothy McVeigh is the man convicted of the Oklahoma bombing which killed 168 people. According to this same article a Massachusetts preacher called on his congregation, in whose attendance was president Bill Clinton, to forgive this murderer. Here are the preacher's words, "Can each of you look at a picture of Timothy McVeigh and forgive him? I have, and I invite you to do the same."

I thought some time ago, If I don't get with it we will never get through the book of Ephesians. Then when I began to prepare this message I said to myself, How can I cover this phrase, "the forgiveness of sins" in a few moments? And if I should, I should leave you with no greater insight and questions than you have had on this topic until now.

So far in Ephesians 1:7 we have looked at 1 The place of redemption. Redemption is in Christ. Then we considered the people of redemption. It is "we", born again believers. Third we saw that the price of redemption is the blood of Jesus Christ. And this morning, continuing in Ephesians 1:7 we have the parallel of redemption. Paul writes thus, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins...." There is a parallel between redemption and forgiveness. It is this parallel of redemption, the topic of forgiveness we will consider this morning.

4) The parallel of redemption -  
forgiveness of sins

-Elements related to forgiveness

#### A BROKEN RELATIONSHIP

After God had created everything He looked at everything including man and said it was very good. God and man could communicate and they had a living relationship. God married the man and woman and blessed them and instructed them. Then came the hiss of the serpent and man's fall into sin and sin broke man's relationship with God. Sin breaks relationships and one of the key ingredients to restore broken relationships is forgiveness.

At least two parties are involved in broken relationships. Sin does disastrous things to both. On the part of the offending party there is guilt. On the part of the offended party there is anger. The anger I am talking about is not bad anger. God has this kind of anger too when He is sinned against. Scripture tells us He is angry with the wicked all day long. This anger is that feeling inside that happens when I have been wronged. This feeling breaks the relationship between the two parties. After Adam and Eve sinned, their relationship was broken and man hid from God. This anger, if not handled in the Biblical manner turns to resentment and bitterness. Now both guilt and resentment and bitterness are burdens man was not designed to carry. When we carry guilt or bitterness our physical bodies react. The chemical reactions in the body are detrimental to the health of a person.

VENGEANCE: Another item related to forgiveness is vengeance. When you or I

are wronged our immediate and natural response is to seek vengeance. Vengeance is not wrong. The Greek word for vengeance is *ekdikēsis*, meaning proceeding from justice. Vengeance must proceed from justice, I think for this reason God has removed all vengeance from man and taken it to Himself. Man is not generally capable of vengeance proceeding from justice. We will look at more of this later. Even the martyrs who have already gone to heaven look for vengeance on the wrongs done them (Rev. 6:9-11). And God promises to avenge them.

**JUSTICE:** In forgiveness there must be justice. Vengeance cries for justice to be done. Justice demands that the right price is paid for the wrong done. What is the price for sin? Death. If this price is not paid, justice has not been done. In Ephesians 1:7 we find that the blood of Christ was paid for sin.

**MERCY:** There is another word that gives us an element related to forgiveness. It is mercy. God's justice demands that every sin receive its just punishment. That punishment is death. But if we all died the moment we sinned there would be no salvation and we would all be lost.

There is a very important aspect to God's character and it is that He is a merciful God. Now God's mercy calls for Him to seek some way to clear man of sin and restore man to Himself. That brings us to another crucial element related to forgiveness.

**FOREBEARANCE:** Justice demands that every sin be fully paid for. But justice does allow for time to elapse between the wrong deed and the exercise of justice. This action of waiting before justice is served is called forbearance. The Greek word is *anochē*, a holding back of punishment (See Rom. 3:25).

CONFESSION: There is yet another element to forgiveness that must be considered. Today there is a lot of teaching about unconditional forgiveness. It is this kind of forgiveness that was extended by the school-mates of the 3 teenagers shot in Kentucky and by the preacher in Massachusetts regarding the Oklahoma bomber. There is no justice in this kind of forgiveness, nor is there any clearing of guilt. It is a purely humanistic forgiveness.

A verse often used in support of this kind of forgiveness is Luke 23:34. Jesus, when He hung on the cross and looked down on those casting lots for His clothes said, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." I want you to notice several things here. He did not say, "Father, I forgive them." Nor does the Scripture say God forgave them. Notice that the ground of Jesus' request is that they do not know what they are doing.

Now turn to Luke 17:1-4. This passage teaches that forgiveness is to be granted on the ground of repentance. Forgiveness becomes an obligation when the wrongdoer truly repents. Repentance is a condition to forgiveness. God cannot and will not forgive unless this condition is met. If He could, His Son's death was a total waste. If He would, His justice is impaired.

SATISFACTION OR COVERING OF SIN: In forgiveness the offended party must be satisfied. Let us say that I have said something nasty to someone. Immediately I am sorry and so I offer that person a chewing gum or a candy or any other substitute thing. There is no satisfaction until I go and say, "I'm sorry I said that. It was wrong of me. Would you forgive me?" The theological term in the

Bible for this satisfaction is found in Romans 3:25, propitiation.

When the price has been paid and justice has been done and is accepted by the wrongdoer the relationship is restored. The key element here is *propitiation*. In the OT tabernacle was a room called the Holy of Holies. In the Holy of Holies was the ark of the covenant. Inside the ark of the covenant were the two tables of the law and a few other things. Over these two tables of the law was a covering called the mercy seat.

I quote from our Bible Study notes on the tabernacle some time ago: "The name mercy seat is an unfortunate name. The Hebrew word is *kapporeth*. The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament says, 'The word, however, is not related to mercy and of course was not a seat.' The word *kapporeth* comes from the root word to atone. This article suggests that a better name might be 'Place of Atonement.' The NIV calls it an Atonement Cover. Vines Dictionary says the Hebrew word *kapporeth* is connected to the verb *kipper* which means to cover up or wipe out and hence to atone for offenses, to forgive."

When forgiveness occurs the anger of the offended party has been satisfied and the guilt of the offender has been lifted, the wrong deed has been covered and the relationship is restored.

-Question: You might well ask, "Pastor Phil, if it is correct as you say that one is not required to forgive until repentance takes place, how do I keep from holding a grudge or letting bitterness creep in?"

Answer: 1. If the one who wronged you is a Christian. Sometimes, especially for petty things we need to learn to live in

forbearance (Eph. 4:1-2; Col. 3:12-13). When a Christian sins against a Christian, that matter cannot be silently put under the rug, not even under the name of forgiveness (See Matt. 18:15-18). If we do not deal with such matters in the Scriptural manner it brings about bitterness and man was not built to carry bitterness. What do I do in such cases? I need to lovingly confront this matter and take care of it in the prescribed way.

2. If the one who wronged you is not a Christian. Romans 12:17-21 has a word for us here (Read). First, do not repay anyone evil for evil. Second, as much as possible live peaceably with all men. Third, do not avenge yourselves. Fourth, make room for God's wrath. If we avenge ourselves, God will not avenge us. If we make room for God's wrath, God will repay the guilty person for, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." But what do I do in the mean while? (Read 20-21 and Matt. 5:38-48). So, when I have been wronged I lovingly make room for God to do what He does best and then I set about to love my enemy and do good to him. It is following such instructions that will keep us from bitterness.

-Definition of forgiveness: Forgiveness is the loving cancellation or covering of a debt based on the repentance of the offender, which relieves the anger of the offended and the guilt of the offender and restores the relationship to wholeness.

CONCL: Ephesians 1:7 says, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins..." Thank God, in Christ we have forgiveness of sins with God. If you are here this morning and have never accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour we would be privileged to help you. But I would like centre the thoughts of the conclusion to this message to the lives of believers.

Have you wronged someone and there is guilt in your life? You need to seek forgiveness. Psalm 32:1, "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." Here is a general rule of thumb. If you have wronged someone in private, confess in private. If you have wronged someone in public, if possible confess before those people.

Has someone wronged you and you are hurting, or maybe you carry resentment and bitterness? If the person is a Christian, you need to do one of two things. Consider if this matter is something in which you ought to exercise loving forbearance and allow the person to grow in grace. The important Scriptures here are Ephesians 4:1-2 and Colossians 3:12-13. If you do this you do not have the right to talk of this matter to others. If the matter is such where you feel forbearance is in order, confess to the Lord your resentment or bitterness and then begin to pray for that person, that God would work in that person's life to bring them to Christian maturity.

If that does not help or if the matter needs is important enough to be confronted, then you need to talk to that person. The important Scripture here is Matthew 18:15-18 and Luke 17:1-4. If you are unsure, I would be willing to sit down with you and discuss the matter with you first. When you begin this process, it needs to be finished in the prescribed manner and it has very serious consequences with it if the offender does not repent.

If the person who has wronged you is a non-Christian you need to lovingly place the right to vengeance in the hands of God. You need to say, "I give away the right to dwell on this offence; I will not hold a grudge; I relinquish every right to recompense or vengeance to God Almighty. I make room for God's wrath and rest this case with Him, Amen." After this transaction is completed then comes the responsibility to actively love that person for Christ's sake. Two important references here are Romans 12:14-21 and Matthew 5:38-48.