

Message Summary

When we first become Christians, humble faith and obedience begin with excitement and rigor (cf. Mk. 5:18-20; Acts 3:8-10). If only things stayed that way! In a Genesis 3, fallen world, we are lured by our own desires into the sin that so easily entangles us (Hb. 12:1; Jm. 1:14-15). Jesus addresses how to overcome such sin in our lives as Christians and grow in maturity.

Jesus starts by warning against leading others into sin, especially children and young Christians (vv. 1-2). It would be better to drown in a river with a huge rock around one's head than to lead others into sin. Similarly, when others sin against you, confront in a Biblical and godly way (v. 3). When those whom we confront repent, we must be willing to forgive, even up to seven times a day (v. 4). We will be sinned against in this sinful, fallen world. The only hope for sustaining family and friendships is to extend much forgiveness, as much forgiveness as we have received from Christ.

Such forgiveness requires God's supernatural, enabling power to achieve. When the apostles recognize the level of faith God is commanding, they ask Jesus to increase their faith (vv. 5-6). Right relationships are forged through faith and forgiveness. The reason we don't forgive is a lack of faith in God. When we don't trust God, we presume on our relationships and forget the forgiveness God has shown to us. But for those with faith, Jesus promises supernatural and miraculous for humble trust and obedience. The parable of the unworthy servant illustrates (vv. 7-10). This servant is faithful at plowing, caring for the sheep, cooking, and serving. But though the servant works hard, he is unworthy to serve the master. Jesus identifies Himself as the boss and master, and we are mere humble servants. The underlying attitude that births all other right attitudes towards faith and obedience is the heart of a servant's love for his master.

Finally, Jesus demonstrates thankfulness through healing ten lepers (vv. 11-19). All cry for mercy to Jesus, and Jesus heals all. Nine took Jesus' healing and return to life as usual. They got what they wanted from Jesus and returned to life as usual. But one, a Samaritan, didn't take Jesus' healing for granted. He returned to not only thank Jesus, but also fall on his face in worship to God Himself, who had brought such supernatural power of healing from both sickness and sin.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

Look at Rm. 14:13-23. How were Christians flaunting their freedom in a way that was a "stumbling block" of sin to other Roman believers?¹ What legitimate freedoms today may be a stumbling block to other Christians, especially children and young believers? What should our attitude and practice be with such freedoms?

Ken Sande (*The Peacemaker*) identifies four steps to confront sin: Glorify God in intention, Get the log out of your own eye, Gently restore, and Go and be reconciled. Why can it be difficult to confront sin? Which of these four steps are most challenging for you? Is it more difficult for you to courageously confront sin, or confront it in a right and Biblical way?

How does lack of faith yield unwillingness to forgive (vv. 3-6)?

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

¹ Some, especially newer, Roman Christians could not eat meat or drink wine in good conscience. They feared the meat might have been used in pagan rituals at some point. The wine, they objected, might contain gnats that had accidentally flown in. To consume gnats was a violation of Mosaic law (Lev. 11:41-42).

Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to examine what the sermon and its text mean, to apply the Word to your life, and to guide how you pray. Please note that you don't have to use all of the questions. These are just options (along with the digging deeper section) to help you frame the family/small group discussion.

1. In anything you are involved in now tempting or leading others into sin (vv. 1-2)?
2. Are you flaunting your freedom in any way that leads other Christians, especially children and young Christians, into sin?
3. Are there any Christians in active sin around you whom you need to confront?
4. Are there any Christians who have sinned against you who you still need to forgive?
5. Do you have the hard work of a servant toward the Lord, and the humility to recognize that you are an unworthy one?
6. Do you humbly trust what Jesus says in thankfulness, or take what you want from God and forget His grace and commands?

Prayer

- Pray for Our Church:
 - Thank God for having mercy on us in the bondage of our sin, and freeing us from it just as He did the lepers from their skin disease (vv. 11-19).
 - Read over Col. 3:12-17. Pray that God would produce these marks of humble faith and obedience in the life of Christ Fellowship.
- Pray for Our Community:
 - Pray that God would give us the hearts and hands of unworthy servants for the Lord in our own communities.
 - Pray for reconciling peace and forgiveness of sin to show the gospel our friends and family around us.
- Pray for Our World:
 - Pray for the international students who return for fall classes at Gadsden State soon. Pray that our church would sow many gospel seeds among them, and that the Lord would use such gospel seeds to bring a great harvest of souls for God's glory.
 - Pray that the students exposed to the gospel here would be faithful as missionaries to their own people and contexts upon their return.

Recommended Resources

Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004)