

**Sermon Notes of
Elder Larry Omasta's Sermon on October 20, 2019:**

**"The Power of God's Love –
Inspiring Our Forgiveness of Others (Colossians 3:12)"**

[In today's sermon, Elder Larry Omasta shows us that it's through the power of God's love, and not by our own efforts, that we are able to forgive people who have deeply offended us, even though it's so difficult to do.]

Notes

Introduction:

- Now the last time I spoke here was in May and I gave the message showing how God's love transforms us out of our self-guilt.
- Because often times we don't think Jesus has forgiven a particularly bad sin of ours just like Peter didn't.
- Peter couldn't forgive himself for denying his Lord Jesus at the night He was betrayed and taken captive by the Roman soldiers.

- So today, we going to explore another aspect of this subject, which is a tough one for many, and that is: how do we totally forgive others in spite of the horrific things they have done to us?
- In fact, several of you talked to me after my last sermon about how you needed to forgive certain people who have deeply hurt you in the past and how you are struggling with it.

Deeply hurt:

- Now, as human beings, when we invest ourselves in deep personal relationships, we open up our hearts to the wounds that are caused by someone's disloyalty to us or even betrayal of us.
- Examples of being hurt:
 - A person betrays our friendship and says ugly things about us;
 - a fellow co-worker falsely accuses us of a wrong doing involving the job;
 - a parent abuses us either physically or emotionally;
 - or a spouse suddenly leaves our marriage without any apology or comforting words.
 - All of these types of hurts continue to fester within us.

- Now, some people are lucky; they seem to have "gracious glands" that secrete the juices of forgetfulness.
- They forget the hurts that they have experienced. And, they never hold a grudge.
- But most of us find that the pains of the past keep rolling through our memories, and there's nothing we can do to stop the pains of the past from engulfing us.

- Despite their best intentions, people are unfair to each other and hurt each other deeply.
- And so, forgiving seems almost unnatural.

- Our sense of fairness tells us that people should pay for the wrong they do to us.
- Because we hurt so badly, many of us ask – “Is forgiveness even fair? Haven’t some people even gone beyond the place of forgiveness?”

Unforgiving spirit:

- But, there’s another side of this story we need to look at.
- When we refuse to forgive others, we place ourselves in bondage to an unforgiving spirit, which is accompanied by tension, strife, irritation, frustration, anxiety and what’s even worse bitterness.
- Bitterness is never constructive; bitterness is always destructive.
- It doesn’t make any difference what people have done to us or how bad it was or how often they did it.
- Nothing good ever comes from the bitterness that overwhelms us against a person.
- But, as human beings, we can “justify” bitterness so easily.
- We can tell ourselves, “Well, I have a right to be bitter, because of what that person did to me.”
- However, if we allow bitterness to take root in us, we actually relinquish control of our lives.
- We simply cannot live with bitterness, because bitterness will eat away at us until we are emotionally destroyed.
- Unfortunately, when we become bitter towards someone and can’t forgive them, we become that person’s emotional slave for the rest of our life!
- Bitterness can paralyze us. Even when we genuinely want to love another person, we can’t.
- It is not that we don’t want to – we simply can’t.

Personal story:

- And I’ve personally known several people who allowed this to happen to them. For example, Judith and I have known a lady, who got tremendously offended by a couple, especially the husband who attended our congregation in the past.
- The lady became so bitter towards them that she no longer attended church because this couple might want to talk to her there, which she wouldn’t be able to stand it.
- She was so bitter towards them that she said that whenever she even just saw them, she just started boiling inside with anger and resentment.
- As you can see, her bitterness towards them completely changed her life.
- And because of this, we had to be very careful in how we talked with her, because she had become so sensitive and was now so easily offended by even casual harmless comments.

Bitterness:

- And bitterness also hinders our talking about Jesus. What kind of a Christian testimony can we have if we are bitter towards others?

- How can we convincingly talk to people about the forgiveness of God when we refuse to forgive those who have wronged us, either intentionally or accidentally?
- So, as a result, when we allow bitterness to take over our lives, that bitterness spills over into our relationship of all those around us.
- **Hebrews 12:15** warns us very clearly about bitterness in our lives

Be careful that none of you fails to respond to the grace which God gives, for if one does there can very easily spring up in that person a bitter spirit which is not only bad in itself but can also poison the lives of many others (Phillips translation).

God's solution:

- So, what is the solution to all this misery?
- When we fully comprehend God's forgiveness toward us, we need to be in unison with God and display our forgiveness towards others.
- Now, throughout Jesus' ministry, He consistently taught that we need to forgive others.
- But not only did He proclaim it, He also demonstrated it very vividly with His words from the cross:

“Father. Forgive them: for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34 NIV).

- Jesus was talking about all sinners especially about the ones who were unjustly going to kill him on the cross.
- Now we need to realize that no one around Jesus had confessed their sin, nor had they apologized for what they were doing and they certainly had not repented.
- Yet, Jesus didn't condemn them to eternal punishment because of their evil deeds against Him, but rather He totally and completely forgave them.
- So we see that Jesus demonstrates through His prayer of forgiveness on the cross that God's forgiveness does not depend on human actions, abilities or degrees of contrition.
- On the cross, Jesus reaches out to all of us with unconditional forgiveness.
- And Jesus wants us to reach out and forgive others the same way.
- And as believers in Jesus, we are told to live a life that doesn't condemn others and is able to freely exercise forgiveness to all.
- Jesus gives these incredible instructions to his followers in **Matthew 5:44-47 (NIV)**.

“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, (why) 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?”

- The apostle Paul elaborates on this specific teaching of Jesus in his letters to Christians about how they should live out their lives.

Colossians 3:12 (NIV), Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13) Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Ephesians 4:32 (NIV), Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Is it possible to do this?

- At first glance at these Scriptures, we think, “Wow!! That seems impossible to do.”
- And, you know what, we’re absolutely right. Yes, it is impossible to demonstrate forgiveness by our own efforts, once we’ve been hurt and deeply offended by others.
- But, because Jesus Christ dwells in us, as believers, we have a spiritual nature that will help us to forgive.
- We received this new spiritual nature when we received Jesus through the Holy Spirit. Paul put it this way:

Galatians 2:20 (NIV), I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

(Amplified Version), I have been crucified with Christ [that is, in Him I have shared His crucifixion]; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body I live by faith [by adhering to, relying on, and completely trusting] in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

- Now as a Christian, the life we live today is an expression of the life of Jesus.
- We have the capacity to forgive when we have been deeply hurt because Jesus, living within us, is able to release to us His love and forgiveness toward everyone who has hurt us, just as Jesus forgave those who crucified Him.

The power of God’s love:

- That’s why the sermon title for today’s message is: “The Power of God’s Love – Inspiring Our Forgiveness of Others”.
- And it’s so important for us to understand that it’s Jesus’ life within us that makes it possible for us to forgive everyone who has inflicted upon us all kinds of hurt and abuse, even in the most heinous forms, because of His incredible love within us.
- By faith, we can allow Jesus to express that forgiveness through us toward others.
- And when we forgive others, who have deeply hurt us, we release ourselves from self-destructing bitterness.
- This incredible release gives us physical and spiritual healing, and it frees us from bondage to other people.
- As we forgive one another, we enjoy reconciliation and where applicable, the joy of restoring healthy loving relationships.

- So what we need to do is to ask God to help us view from a different perspective that person who has wronged us.
- We need to ask God to remove our bitterness toward that person.
- If we feel it is appropriate, and will not cause more problems than it solves, we should go to that person and become reconciled to them. But that's not always possible.
- We have two choices in life. We can allow bitterness to destroy us, or we can allow God to develop us into the person He wants us to become.
- We must choose to view our circumstances and hurts as tools to be used by God to further develop our spiritual lives.
- Forgiveness is liberating, but it is also sometimes painful.
- It is liberating because we are freed from the heavy load of guilt, bitterness, and anger we have harbored within.
- But it can also be very painful because it's difficult to have to face ourselves, God, and others with our failures because of our human nature.
- It seems easier to blame others and go on defending our position of bitterness and resentment though we continue to hurt ourselves by our attitude of un-forgiveness.
- But the truth is – the poison of an unforgiving spirit that permeates our entire lives, which separates us from other people, can never be adequately defended.
- That's because it is devastating to our spiritual and emotional well-being and to our physical health.

Meditation thoughts:

- So how can all of this be accomplished?
- The answer as to how God will be able to give us His forgiving spirit is through meditation and then heartfelt prayer.
- So, now let's look at a few things we need to think about and meditate on before we approach God in prayer – which includes our attitude of bitterness and our attitude of being un-forgiving.
- First of all, we need to ask God to allow us to forgive the person who hurt us by taking away our intense painful thoughts about the incident or incidents.
- We need to be able to release the person from the debt we feel is owed us because of the offense they gave us.
- With God guiding us, we should be able to say the person's name and declare "You are free and forgiven."
- And we need to do that whether the person has apologized to us or not. In most cases, they haven't apologized and probably never will.
- Secondly, we then need to think about asking God to give us a spirit of reconciliation toward that person who has offended us.
- And to help us realize that this person is struggling with their own imperfections and sinfulness and desperately need God's intervention in their lives so they will be able to be changed.

- And one more important thing for us to realize is this: just because we have forgiven someone, doesn't prevent us from protecting ourselves from being further abused from that person.
- We need to realize that our forgiveness of what they did to us does not make that imperfect person perfect.
- They still struggle with their sinfulness and that's why we need to protect ourselves from them.
- And most importantly, we need to pray for them that they would allow God's intervention in their lives and begin to make changes.
- Also, finally, don't forget to thank God for using each person as a tool in our life to deepen our insight into His grace and conforming us more and more into the image of His Son.
- And this is something we don't often think about. How God deals with us to improve our spiritual growth and maturity.
- These are the key things that we need to think about and meditate on before going to God in prayer.

Sample Prayer:

- So, in conclusion, here's a shortened version of a sample prayer that we need to pray in asking God to help us forgive those who have greatly offended us.
 - "Because I am forgiven and accepted by You Lord Jesus, I can now forgive and accept (say the person's name) unconditionally in Jesus Christ."
 - "With your inspiration Lord, I choose to forgive (say the person's name) no matter what you did to me. I release you (say the person's name) from the hurts and pain that I've suffered from (take time to name them all), and you (say the person's name) are no longer accountable to me for them. You (say the person's name) are now free from my anger and resentment."
 - And now, Lord Jesus, by faith, I receive your unconditional love and acceptance of me in the place of my hurting, and I trust that You, Lord Jesus, will meet all my emotional needs and give me Your peace and Your comfort, so I won't live in turmoil or bitterness any longer. Thank you Lord. Amen!"

Concluding comments:

- This prayer shows us that we definitely need to be in harmony with the love of Jesus so He can heal us of all our wounds and then transform us to be loving individuals to those who have treated us ever so badly.
- And we need to realize that this love is so amazing and so far and above what we can ever generate on our own, that we praise God for His love in us to lead us and guide us as we live out our lives.

Closing prayer