The Big If’s in Forgiveness

Luke 17:3

Introduction:
A. We all need God’s forgiveness (1 John 1:8-10).
B. Most of us need our brethren’s forgiveness at times.
C. Forgiveness is not automatic and unconditional.
D. There are two big if’s in forgiveness.

Discussion:
I. Repentance (Luke 17:3).
A. No one can have forgiveness without repentance.
   1. The alien sinner must repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38).
   2. The erring child of God must repent and pray to God (Acts 8:22).
B. Repentance is more than being sorry and acting better.
   1. “Repent” means to change one’s mind (heart) for the better..” (Thayer).
   2. Without a basic change of heart there is no repentance.
C. Repentance involves four elements:
   1. Godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:9-10) – not merely sorry.
      a. Could be sorry for many reasons rather than godly sorrow.
      b. One must have a sorrowful contrite spirit.
      c. Godly sorrow and pride cannot mix – do not demand forgiveness, beg for it.
      d. Godly sorrow and self-pity do not mix – “How awful people treat me”
   2. Repentance itself – a genuine change of heart.
   3. Confession of sins (1 John 1:9; Jas. 5:16)

II. Forgiveness (Matt. 6:14-15).
A. Forgiving others is an essential part of Christian’s character (Col. 3:12, 13)
   1. He knows that he is just a forgiven sinner.
   2. He knows that sooner or later he may need someone’s forgiveness (cf. Gal. 6:1).
   3. He knows the folly of saying, “I will never.” (Matt. 26:35)
B. An unforgiving person cannot go to heaven (Matt. 18:21-35).
   1. Once the conditions are met, no limit to forgiveness (vv. 21-22; Lk. 17:3,4).
   2. We have been forgiven far more than we are asked to forgive (vv. 23-33).
   3. Unless we forgive from the heart those who repent we will go to hell! (v. 34, 35)

Conclusion:
A. The Lord wants to forgive you, but you must humble yourself and meet the conditions.
B. Remember: Only the penitent and the forgiving are forgiven.