

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)
 - 4. Fruits worthy of repentance – a true change of life (Matt. 3:8; Acts 26:20).

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.