*Introduction*

The last time I spoke it was on the subject of forgiveness. We especially looked at the reason why we should forgive one another. In so doing we looked at 6 reasons why we should forgive:

They were:

Because God commands it, because we have been forgiven, if we don’t it will destroy us, to avoid being tormented, because unforgiveness grieves the Holy Spirit, and lastly because unforgiveness blocks God from hearing our prayers.

If God, who created us and all around us, the one who sustains us and who sent His One and Only Son, Jesus to take the wrath of all our sins, can forgive us to the extent that once dealt with our sins are remembered no more, surely we to can forgive all those who have done us wrong.

Surely it is that simple, God forgave us therefore we should joyfully forgive others.

Unfortunately, this is not the case, because you and I know that we often struggle to forgive and let go of the hurt that others have done to us, despite the fact that our forgiveness is dependent on our forgiving.

***MT 6:14-15 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.***

This morning, God willing, we are going to go back to the parable of the unforgiving servant and look at how God deals with US when we do not forgive one another.

There is a process, I believe, of 4 parts that God uses to get us to forgive, it starts softly but gets very hard depending upon our response.

Those four steps are:

Conviction

Chastening

Scourging

The sin that leads to death.

**Conviction**

You are in a car park, reversing your car out of its space. Accidentally you reverse into the car opposite you, not hard, but you feel it.

You get out of your car and inspect the damage. Your car is okay but there is a small dent in the other car. You look around you, there is no one about.

What do you do?

The, perhaps, common thing would be to get back in your car and say “no one will know” and drive off.

As a Christian, we know that it would be wrong to do this of course, and would never drive off without leaving our details on the other car, would we?

When the owner of the car returns and sees the dent, you can imagine his/her thoughts, I’m sure. How would you feel if it happened to you?

As you make your way home, you feel guilty at what you have done. We know that the proper thing to do is to return to the scene and confess to the other driver what you had done, and make amends.

When we have unforgiveness in our hearts, God uses guilt to make us respond. He wants to motivate us to confess the sin of unforgiveness, repent, put it right and return to Christ.

If we fail to respond to that conviction, God will move to the next step.

**Chastening**

This may not be the best example, but when I was a young boy, about 9 or 10 yrs old, I collected soldiers and things. There was a model shop on the High St in Bedford, I went in there to buy a toy canon which cost 47p. I gave the shopkeeper a 50 p piece, and in return he gave me the canon and the change........and the 50 p piece. I looked at the money, said nothing and put it in my pocket and walked out of the shop.

I went home exstatic, I had got the canon for nothing. I knew that I should have gone back and pointed out the mistake, but I didn’t.

I took the canon out of its box in order to play with it. The first time I primed it in order to fire it, guess what? It broke.

When chastening us, God uses circumstances to get our attention. This could include sudden unemployment, financial difficulty, unexpected expenses or many other things:

***HEB 12:7-11 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.***

Let me just add, that if you are going through a rough time at the moment it does not mean that you are being scourged, there may be some other reason for what is happening.

But, on the whole, God will have brought something to your attention to which you have not responded, and He is trying to correct you.

**Scourging**

If we do not respond to God’s conviction or chastening and he is forced to scourge us, we’re in serious trouble.

Scourging is what Jesus referred to in his parable of the king and the debtor; scourging is when God releases us to the tormentors.

***MT 18:32-34 "Then the master called the servant in. `You wicked servant,' he said, `I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.***

Paul also warned the Christians in Corinth about the Communion, he said:

***1COR 11:28-32 A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.***

Be of no mistake, if we do not forgive others, and hold unforgiveness in our hearts, God will NOT allow you to go on doing it. He will convict you, He will chasten you and if necessary He will scourge you.

He does not do this because He wants to beat you, or because He enjoys it. He does it because you are a child of God and He is your father and wants the best for you, He loves you and cares for you.

God does not want to see your life affected by the causes of pent up anger and unforgiveness, He wants you to be free and to live a healthy and holy life.

But if we fail to respond, he has no option but to deal with us.

Lastly, we come to the most serious part of Gods dealings with us who are not willing to forgive.

**The sin that leads to death.**

When we think of this, we usually look at grieving the Holy Spirit as the sin that leads to death.

When we do not respond to any of Gods dealings with us, we sometimes leave God no choice but to bring us home to glory.

Paul stated this in his letter to the Corinthians about communion – he said

***That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.***

The reason that some were sick and that some had died was because of the way they were treating the Lords death at the communion table.

Let me tell you a true story.

Jim was the pastor of a large church in America, in he=is congregation was an evangelist called Ray.

Ray was anointed of God and of impeccable character and who supported Jim.

They were great friends for over 20 years.

However, due to no fault on Ray’s part, some in the church were more attracted to Ray’s evangelistic ministry that their own pastor’s ministry. Jim began to resent ray. Envy got its ugly grip on Jim’s heart and he began to speak evil of Ray, even from the pulpit.

One day, another Pastor from a different church rang Jim and said “Jim, do you love your brother Ray?” After a long pause, Ray said “I don’t have anything against the man”

The pastor replied, “That’s not what I asked you, I asked you if you loved him”

Jim stammered for a moment and then spat out “I don’t think it’s any of your business what I feel about him!” and slammed the phone down. The pastor was shocked at the venom in his voice.

2 weeks later Jim, in his mid-forties, in the prime of his health dropped dead of a heart attack.

Did he commit the sin that leads to death? The point is this, If we do not listen to the conviction, chastening and scourging that God brings and do not repent of our sin, no matter what it is, it will harm us to the extent that God may have no choice but to call us home.

*Conclusion*

All of us are witnesses for Christ in this courtroom called earth.

Our lost friends and relatives, those we work with etc. are the judge and jury and it is Christ on trial. The world wants to know if Jesus is Lord or a lunatic with false claims. He claimed to be God, so He must be one or the other.

The Holy Spirit is the defence lawyer pleading Christ’s case, He is here to convince the lost world that Jesus IS LORD.

We are His witnesses. We testify “in court” every day, for or against the defendant Jesus.

If we are good witnesses, all is well, but when our witness becomes clouded by sin, our testimony does not support the Holy Spirit’s case.

He will convict us so that we will repent and return to Him, if we do not, He will chasten us. If we still refuse to repent, He will scourge us. Finally if we do not turn back and become the witnesses that Jesus needs n the courtroom, the Holy Spirit may have no choice but to take us to heaven.

Our witness MUST support the case for Christ, we must learn to let go of our unforgiveness and return to Christ – the eternal destiny of those around us, who witness our behaviour is at stake.

Are you holding on to something that you know you should repent of and let go?

God, through His Son, Jesus, has already paid the price for it on the cross. We have no right to want additional payment. Forgive that person, let God deal with it.

For as the middle verse in the Bible says

***PS 118:8 It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man.***

Is God speaking to you?

Let us pray.