

SBC – July 10, 2022
Matt. 18:21-35 (NKJV)
“A Parable on Forgiveness”

69

Prayer:

Slide # 1

Theme: *Christ the King*

Outline:

- Chps. 1-2 The Advent of the King. (Proving His LEGAL right to the throne by His genealogy.)
- Chp. 3 The Forerunner of the King and the King’s baptism.
- Chp. 4 The Test of the King. (Proving His MORAL right to the throne by not yielding to temptation; and exhibiting His kingdom resume.)
- Chps. 5-7 The Pronouncements of the King. (Proving His JUDICIAL right to the throne as seen in the wisdom of His kingdom teaching.)
- Chps. 8-10 The Power of the King. (Proving His PROPHETICAL right to the throne by fulfilling prophecy.)
- Chps. 11-12 The Rejection of the King.
- Chp. 13 The Parables of the King.
- Chps. 14-16 The Revelations of the King.
- Chps. 17-20 The Instructions of the King.**
- Chps. 21-23 Formal Rejection of the King.
- Chps. 24-25 The Predictions of the King.
- Chps. 26-27 The Passion of the King.
- Chp. 28 The Resurrection of the King.

God’s people are ultimately headed for the kingdom. We are not there yet, but we are headed there. How should we then live? That is the question answered by Matthew 18.

Matthew 18 is the fourth of five great discourses in the book of Matthew.

Slide # 2

The 5 Discourses in Matthew

- The Sermon on the Mount– Matt. 5-7
- Commissioning of the Twelve– Matt. 10
- Parables of the Kingdom- Matt. 13
- **Community Instructions - Matt. 18**
- Olivet Discourse (End Times) Matt. 24-25

Slide # 3***Matthew 18 consists of 3 great emphases.***

Matt. 18:1-14 – Humility

Matt. 18:15-20 – Accountability

Matt. 18:21-35 - Forgiveness

1) **Humility** is the dominant theme in 18:1-14. We must humble ourselves in saving faith to enter the kingdom and then the greatest in the kingdom are the most humble. True humility is seen in how we treat others.

2) **Accountability**. God's people are called to holiness and there is a mutual accountability in the family of God. We need to love each other enough to confront each other when sin is involved. Such action is ordained by heaven.

3) **Forgiveness**. When people mess up they need to be confronted and when they are repentant we need to be forgiving.

It is appropriate that the section on confronting a brother in sin and Church Discipline in 18:15-20 is then followed by this long section in Matt. 18:21-35 on forgiveness.

It is important not to despise a brother or cause them to stumble (Mt. 18:1-10). It is important to seek to restore a fallen brother (18:11-20). And it is important to forgive them once they come to repentance (18:21-35).

In context Jesus has just outlined the steps of confronting and dealing with a brother who has sinned against you as seen in Matt. 18:15-20. It is in that context that we then have this question from Peter...

Matthew 18:21–35 (NKJV)

21 Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”

Peter undoubtedly thought he was being most generous in offering to forgive a brother up to seven times because the rabbis based on certain OT Scriptures taught that three strikes and you were out (cf. Amos 1:3; 2:6; Job 33:29, 30).

If a man commits an offence once, they forgive him; if he commits an offence a second time, they forgive him; if he commits an offence a third time, they forgive him; the fourth time they do not forgive him.”

– *Rabbi Jose ben Jehuda*

There is an old worldly proverb that says, 'Fool **me once**, shame on **you**. Fool **me** twice, shame on **me**. Fool **me** three times, shame on both of us.'

The Jews set forgiveness level at three; but Peter suggested up to seven times. Forgiveness is not natural. Someone has said we are never more God-like than when we forgive. King Louis XII of France famously said, “*Nothing smells so sweet as the dead body of your enemy.*” That is natural thinking. But God’s people are a forgiven people, and we are to be a forgiving people. In fact, we are called to be radical forgivers just like God is a radical forgiver. And so...

22 Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

There is a textual debate as to whether this should read seventy-seven times or seventy times seven which would be 490. The debate is irrelevant in that either way Jesus is making the point that we should be willing to forgive endlessly. This is clearly illustrated in the parable that Jesus goes on to give.

However, we should note that the forgiveness theme in verses 21-35 should not be divorced from the accountability theme of verses 15-20. They go together. The forgiveness emphasis in verses 21-35 assumes the person is repentant.

As stated in verse 15 if you confront your brother about sin and he hears you, (that is responds with repentance), then you have gained your brother. That is the basis for true reconciliation and restoration. But if he doesn’t repent as he is confronted with the steps of church discipline then you are to have nothing to do with him as he is to be to you as a heathen and a tax collector.

It does not say you are to forgive him anyway – even if he does not repent! No, if he won’t repent you have not gained your brother and you are to have no dealings with him. This is an important clarification because many teach that no matter what you are to forgive in the sense that you just let him get away with it and just continue on as if nothing happened. That is not biblical! There is accountability in the family of God.

Human depravity can be very "skillful" at playing Christians according to Christian terms (cf. Jer. 17:9). Years ago, we had a couple visit our church and as I met with them, they were having marriage problems. The man had been unfaithful - AGAIN! Once again, he claimed to be repentant and therefore supposed that all should be fine. This was his pattern. As I met with him, he seemed so sincere in his repentance.

A little time went by and yet once again he was involved in yet another affair. And so the pattern of adultery followed by a profession of repentance continued. It got to a point where it was clear he was "**playing**" what I call the "**repentance game**". He knew we as Christians were obligated to forgive him upon repentance, and so upon being caught he would just say the "**magic**" repentance words and make fresh promises claiming all should just forgive him and go on as if nothing had happened.

Slide # 4

“With a few well-chosen words, the tables are turned. Like a wrestler doing an escape and reverse, an offender regains the upper hand. His victims are now expected to forgive and forget.” - **Mart DeHann**

As believers we are to be a forgiving people. Eph. 4:30 says, "forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." Jesus said, "If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him." (Lk. 17:3). But what if the person has a track record of feigning repentance? That is not so easy.

Certainly we should always maintain a spirit of forgiveness even as Jesus on the cross prayed, "**Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.**" (Lk. 23:34). However, it is clear that while Jesus desired for these to be forgiven, they would in reality only be forgiven if they came to true repentance. Only upon true repentance would they know reconciliation with God. In a similar way we should always have a "forgiving spirit" and yet before reconciliation can take place there must be true repentance.

Slide # 5

We must recognize that forgiveness doesn't necessarily restore the status quo. Forgiveness isn't the same as reconciliation. Forgiveness clears the ledger; it does not necessarily instantly rebuild trust. Forgiveness is given; reconciliation is earned. Forgiveness cancels all debts, but it does not eliminate all consequences. – **Gary Inrig**

Never should we countenance a spirit of "vengeance" or a "holier than thou" attitude (cf. Rom. 12:19; 1 Cor. 10:12). We must not become bitter but rather always desire restoration and be willing to forgive (cf. Mt. 18:21-22). Yet at the same time we are not to be naive or undiscerning. This is most certainly a place for working out our salvation with fear and trembling (cf. Phil. 2:12).

There is a place for "testing" repentance. The premiere example of "testing repentance" is found in the life of Joseph. Joseph was a very godly man who was treacherously wronged by his brothers. His story appropriately comes early in the Bible and is given a lengthy treatment in Genesis 37-50. Here we have presented the prolonged story of how Joseph was sold by his older brothers into slavery and ended up down in Egypt.

Twenty years later Joseph was in the position of being exalted to second-in-command over the whole of Egypt. Then his brothers showed up in need of food. The brothers did not recognize Joseph, but he did recognize them. What did Joseph do? Did he immediately say, "**All is forgiven and everything is fine.**" No, he didn't! He TESTED them to see if anything had changed. He TESTED them to see if repentance had taken place. He TESTED them to see if family reconciliation could indeed take place.

Joseph had his brother's incarcerated and then ordered that one of them be sent to bring back their youngest brother who happened to be Joseph's only full-blood brother. He said, "**that your words may be tested to see whether there is any truth in you**" (Gen. 42:16). Immediately the brothers remembered how they had abused Joseph and said among themselves, "**his blood is now required of us**" (Gen. 42:22). The brothers did not realize that Joseph understood their conversation and that this gave him insight into their souls. This demonstrated contrition.

Joseph put them through a battery of tests for this very reason as he wanted to see what their character was all about at this point in their lives and whether or not they had changed (cf. 2 Cor. 7:10-11).

When Benjamin was brought to Egypt Joseph provided all his brothers with a meal, with Benjamin receiving five times the amount of food as the others (Gen. 43:34). How would these other brothers respond to the youngest being so favored? Would they respond with hatred and jealousy as they had responded to Joseph so many years before? In applying these tests Joseph was not being malicious, but rather seeking to discern whether or not reconciliation was possible with his family.

True restoration could only happen if true repentance was in place. The final test was when Joseph's silver cup was placed in the sack of Benjamin as they departed for home. As they were "arrested" and called to account for taking the cup Joseph agreed to let them all go home and keep Benjamin as his slave. Here was the great test which greatly resembled what had happened to him 20 years before. They could get rid of Benjamin, fabricate a story to their father Jacob, and once again move on with their lives.

But things were now different. Judah who had years before suggested selling the favored son (Joseph) now makes an impassioned plea offering his life for the life of Benjamin (cf. Gen. 37:27; 44:33). In brokenness he says, "**God has found out the iniquity of your servants**" (Gen. 44:16).

Thus, true repentance was evidenced in the lives and hearts of Joseph's brothers as they now demonstrated true solidarity with their brother Benjamin and true remorse over what they had done to Joseph. It was on this basis that reunification and reconciliation was now possible. Joseph then revealed himself to his brothers embraced them (cf. Gen. 45:15).

There is a time to say with John the Baptist, "**bear fruits worthy of repentance**" (Mt. 3:8). In true repentance there is a turning to God which should be accompanied by "**works befitting repentance**" (cf. Acts 26:20). Paul noted that the Corinthians had a "**godly sorrow**" which is indicative of true repentance. This repentance CLEARLY displayed itself in their lives by which Paul says, "**you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter**" (2 Cor. 7:11).

Many today have a theology that says no one ever needs to "**prove**" themselves in this way. A flippant "**I repent**" is good enough and should be accepted without any questions. However, I would argue that the example of Joseph refutes this. There is a place for "**testing repentance**" but it must be done with the right heart.

Slide # 6

In normal circumstances, love obliges us to assume the best about those who profess repentance (1 Cor. 13:7). Scripture does suggest, however, that there are certain times when it is legitimate to demand the fruit of repentance before assuming that someone's profession of repentance is genuine (Matt. 3:8; Luke 3:8). -**John MacArthur** in THE FREEDOM AND POWER OF FORGIVENESS, p. 187

Again, what Jesus is teaching us here assumes that the person is truly repentant and therefore we are obligated to forgive them.

There are two great errors that are to be avoided. 1) On the one hand, we must not fail to properly hold people accountable for sin. 2) On the other hand we must not fail to extend forgiveness when they are repentant.

Matt. 18:21-35 is Jesus' longest recorded statement regarding the principle of forgiveness. "*The act of forgiving one who has wronged us is one of the most responsible and spiritual activities in our lives and must be repeated continually throughout one's life.*" (- Liberty Bible Commentary)

Slide # 7

"To forgive for the moment is not difficult. But to go on forgiving, to forgive the same offense every time it recurs to memory --- there's the tussle." – **C.S. Lewis**

What Christ has to teach us here about forgiveness is right where we live.

23 Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.

Christ is here presenting the kingdom standard related to forgiveness. There is a lesson here for all who hope to enter the kingdom. All those headed for the kingdom are forgiven an incalculable amount and therefore are also called to be big forgivers.

Keep in mind this is a parable and parables generally have in view one main point. And the point here is we have been forgiven more than we could ever imagine and therefore ought to be willing to forgive whatever anyone does to us. What we are asked to forgive is comparatively small in comparison to the forgiveness that has been granted to us.

The king in the parable is settling accounts with his servants which is more literally slaves (Gk. doulos).

24 And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.

The king in view here ultimately represents Jesus Who will be King in the Kingdom. In the parable one is brought before the king who owed him ten thousand talents.

The talent (Gk. talanton) was the largest denomination of money in the Roman Empire and ten thousand was the largest number used. The value of a talent was about what one would earn in working for 20 years. That was the value of just one talent – 20 years worth of wages. So now times 20 by 10,000 and you come up with 200,000. This means that in order to pay off the debt this slave would have to work for 200,000 years. I mean to tell you that is working overtime!

The point is this was an impossible debt that could never be paid. And this is how we should see our sin debt before God. It is an impossible debt that we could never pay off.

25 But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.

A common practice in the ancient world was that an indebted person who had no means to pay his debt would be sold into slavery with his family to help pay off the debt that had been incurred (Ex. 21:2-11; Lev. 25:39; Deut. 15:12-18; 2 Kings 4:1; Neh. 4:1; 5:4-8). In this way the lender could recoup some of the money.

26 The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’

Reflecting total humility, he prostrated himself, knowing that he was helpless before the master and totally dependent upon mercy, not justice. – *Ed Glasscock*

27 Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

The man asked for patience and received a full pardon. This was not justice but rather an epic display of GRACE.

The word “forgave” (Gk. aphiemi) means to dismiss, send away, or cancel out. This was a total release from his incalculable debt. This is the experience of all God’s kingdom children. We are trophies of GRACE!

Slide # 8**Colossians 2:13–14 (NKJV)**

13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, **having forgiven you all trespasses,**

14 having **wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us,** which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having **nailed it to the cross.**

All the charges against us were nailed to the cross. Our sin debt was insurmountable. We could never pay it off. But our entire sin debt was paid for by Christ on the cross resulting in believers being forgiven of all trespasses.

How wonderful to be forgiven – and to be forgiven in such a great and magnanimous way.

28 “But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’

This man had just experienced incredible GRACE in which 200,000 years worth of debt had been cancelled out. But going out he found a fellow servant who owed him a mere one hundred denarii. A day’s wages in this day amounted to a denarii as seen in Matt. 20:2. This means this fellow servant owed him about 100 day’s worth of wages or roughly 3 months’ pay.

Slide # 9

10,000 talents (200,000 years’ worth of labor)

Versus

100 denarii (3 months’ worth of labor)

Now it is true that 3 months’ worth of wages is not insignificant but in comparison to 200,000 years worth of wages it is a pittance. This man who had been forgiven so much was not willing to forgive this very little amount by comparison.

This is descriptive of the Christian who has been forgiven so much by God and yet refuses to forgive relatively little things by comparison. We as God's people are all 10,000 talent debtors who have been forgiven all! "The sins of others against us are trivial in comparison to the enormity of our own sins against God." (HCSB)

29 So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'

This fellow servant in abject humility fell down and pleaded with him with the exact same language that he himself had earlier pleaded with his master as seen in verse 26.

He had been so happy to be forgiven his overwhelming impossible debt but now he refused to forgive someone else of a much lesser debt. This represents great sin. "Thank God I am forgiven, but I refuse to forgive you." That is incredibly sinful! And this is exactly what we do as Christians when we refuse to forgive others who have sinned against us.

30 And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt.

Instead of forgiving his fellow servant he went and had him thrown into debtors' prison until he should pay the debt. There was no mercy! He had been shown AMAZING GRACE and yet refused to extend mercy to another.

The natural response to receiving great grace should then be to extend grace. If we are saved by grace, we should be gracious! This is our calling!

Slide # 10

Matthew 5:7 (NKJV)

7 Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.

31 So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done.

This action grieved the fellow servants who saw what had happened. They knew this was dreadfully wrong! And so they went and told the master what had been done. A lack of forgiveness is grievously offensive to fellow believers but it offends God most of all. This is not how His forgiven children are to act!

32 Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.

The master called him to account and charged him with acting wickedly! A lack of forgiveness on the part of the forgiven is WICKED!

When a Christian allows remaining sin to control an attitude or action, he is being wicked, because sin is always sin, whether committed by a believer or unbeliever. The sin of unforgiveness is in some ways even more wicked in a believer, because he has infinitely greater motivation and power to be forgiving than does a person who has never experienced God’s redeeming grace. How can a person accept God’s mercy for all his sin, an unpayable debt, and then not forgive some small offense committed against himself?

– John MacArthur

Such unforgiveness is sheer WICKEDNESS! The meaning of wicked refers to that which is ethically evil or morally bad.

33 Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’

Here was the problem – it was a lack of compassion. The word compassion is often translated as “mercy” (Gk. *eleeo*). Mercy is the idea of taking pity on the undeserving. It has compassion on those in misery who cannot help themselves.

34 And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.

Notice he was delivered to the torturers and not the executioners. This pictures severe disciplinary action and not eternal damnation.

Some have taken the view that those who will not forgive show that in fact they are not saved. It is true that Jesus said all would know we are His disciples by our love for one another and it is true that a KEY way that true love demonstrates itself is in forgiving one another.

Slide # 11

1 Peter 4:8 (NKJV)

8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for **“love will cover a multitude of sins.”**

And it is true that if people are without any love then they don't really know God.

Slide # 12

1 John 4:7–8 (NKJV)

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

If it is true that love is the defining trait of being a child of God, and it is; and if it is true that God's love forgives, and it is; well, then if someone harbors a bitter unforgiving spirit they really should examine themselves to make sure they are in the faith.

John Wesley wrote: “If this [being big forgivers] be Christianity, where do Christians live?” Great question! Hopefully, we can say right here. Hopefully we can say forgiveness defines us. This is the stuff of authentic Christianity! (cf. Ja. 2:13).

At the same time Christians can fall into sin – including the grievous sin of unforgiveness. This is why Christ, and the NT Scriptures so strongly warn us about it. This is an **“in house”** sin against my brother. After teaching us how to pray including, **“forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors”** Christ then gave this warning...

Slide # 13

Matthew 6:14–15 (NKJV)

14 “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Notice Jesus says this in reference to those who have God as their heavenly Father. These people are already saved.

In the Scriptures there is both a “penal” aspect of forgiveness and a “parental” aspect of forgiveness. In saving faith we are forever forgiven of the penal aspect of sin.

Christ has once and for all paid our penalty and we are forever set free from the penalty of sin. However, in our walk when we sin it becomes a maintenance issue with our Father. We are then out of fellowship with God in need of parental forgiveness.

God will not kick us out of His family – our position in the family is forever settled by the cross. But we can be out of step with God and therefore experience His chastening until we get right – until we are willing to forgive.

The “torturers” here represents God’s chastening. A form of the word “torturers” (Gk. *basanistes*) is used to describe different tormenting afflictions (cf. Matt. 4:24; 8:6), or adverse crisis circumstances (cf. Mt. 14:24). This exact word is used to describe the soul of Lot as he was afflicted in Sodom because of the wickedness of the people.

Slide # 14

2 Peter 2:8 (NKJV)

8 (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)—

God may use various torments in his children who refuse to forgive. They are miserable! Unforgiveness leaves one in torment (Heb. 12:7-11). God takes very seriously how His children treat one another. In 1 Cor. 11:30-32 we see that because of how the Christians were mistreating one another some were weak and sick and many had even died under the disciplinary hand of God. I do believe that “unforgiveness” can cut your life short! And that is a bad way to go out.

The world’s worst prison is the prison of an unforgiving heart. If we refuse to forgive others, then we are only imprisoning ourselves and causing our own torment. Some of the most miserable people I have met in my ministry have been people who would not forgive others. They lived only to imagine ways to punish these people who had wronged them. But they were really only punishing themselves.

– **Warren Wiersbe**

35 “So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”

It's not a suggestion that we forgive a repentant brother or sister but rather a command. And if we refuse to do so the hounds of heaven will come after us. The disciplinary torturers and tormenters in one form or another will have their way with us until we come to repentance and are willing to forgive.

Note this is a HEART issue.

It is not enough to merely go through the motions. God demands that we mean it from the heart. If we are to walk in the freedom of forgiveness we ourselves have to be willing to forgive.

“He who cannot forgive others breaks down the bridge over which he himself must pass.”

In this life God will severely discipline those who He has forgiven but then refuse to forgive others. – *The Moody Bible Commentary*

Job's friends were very accusative. They treated him badly and misrepresented God in the process. In the end God made them get right with Job and when Job prayed for them (forgave them) he too was restored.

Slide # 15

Job 42:7–8 (NKJV)

7 And so it was, after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, “My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have **not spoken of Me what is right**, as My servant Job has.

8 Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, **go to My servant Job**, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and **My servant Job shall pray for you**. For I will accept him, lest I deal with you according to your folly; because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has.”

Slide # 16

Job 42:9–10 (NKJV)

9 So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the LORD commanded them; for the LORD had accepted Job.

10 And the **LORD restored Job's losses when he prayed** for his friends. Indeed the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.

In the NT we often quote, "The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" from James 5:16. But it is good to read the entire verse to get the full sense of it.

Slide # 17

James 5:16 (NKJV)

16 **Confess** your trespasses **to one another**, and **pray for one another, that you may be healed**. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

This is God's model! In order to be well spiritually we need to be right with one another. When sin is involved we need to confront one another with the goal of gaining our brother back – getting back into fellowship. But sadly there are times when as it says in Titus 3:10 we have to reject a divisive person after the first and second admonition knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned. However, when repentance takes place we need to be quick to forgive. Then our prayer life will be powerful!

The Church at Corinth had applied Church discipline to a brother in sin. Paul told them it was enough and that they should now forgive him. And then he said this:

Slide # 18

2 Corinthians 2:10–11 (NKJV)

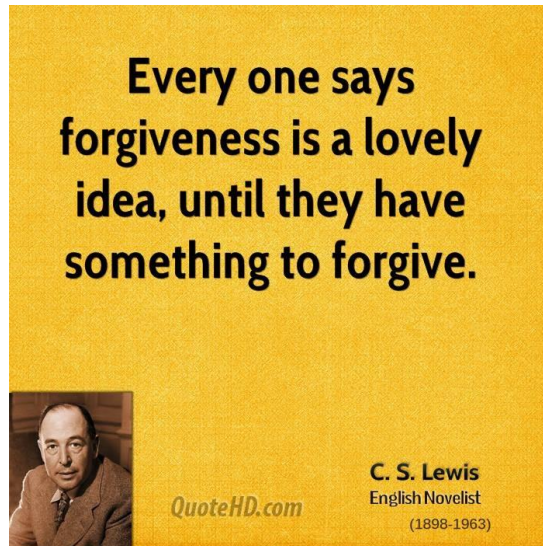
10 Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ,

11 **lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.**

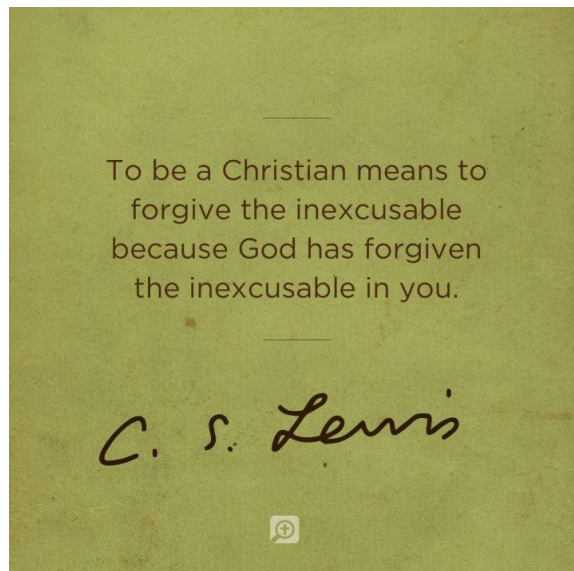
Unforgiveness is Satan's thing. This is a major part of his strategy – to get us fussin, feudin, and fightin where there is a lack of forgiveness.

Forgiveness takes the wind out of the devil's sails. Don't let him take advantage of you. We are not ignorant of his strategies.

Slide # 19



Slide # 20



Forgiveness is always a matter of GRACE. We as believers have received much – in turn we are to also grant much!

If we are saved by grace let us be gracious! This is our calling!