**THE SECOND GREATEST LOVE**

Tom McDonald, 2005, updated 2021

It’s NOT Optional…

* So, let’s start with “What’s the GREATEST LOVE? John 15:13

 “There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

 [v 14: “You **are** My friends, if you **do** what I command.”]

 [v 17: “This is my command: Love each other.”]

* Is that display or demonstration of Love optional?

 Yes, in the sense that one can choose or not choose to lay

 down his life for another without consequence.

* Okay then, what do you suppose the **2nd Greatest Love** could be?

 HINT: Look at something just a bit less than

 actually, physically dying for another.

 What about dying to self – dying to your “rights” when offended by another?

 How about subordinating oneself, humbling oneself to another?

 How does one humble himself to another?

 *Is not asking to be forgiven, a humbling of yourself?*

 *Also, is* ***forgiving*** *someone not actually a way of laying down your life*

 *for another – not once – but many times throughout your life?*

In short, through the marvelous, willed behavior of **forgiving** another

 a wrong, Jesus is giving us a way to lay down our “life” (our pride) in

 love for others many times.

 Micah 6:8. “No, O People, The Lord has told you what is good,

 and this is what He requires of you! To do what is right, to love

 mercy, and to *walk humbly with your God*.” (comment on this)

 And not just once for the **forgiveness** of a wrong, a sin – as He did

 in the willed behavior of laying down his physical life in selfless love

 for the **forgiveness** of the sin of the whole world.

 **Forgiving is the ACT (gift) of love that not only keeps on giving,**

 **but keeps on being able to be given! Hallelujah!**

* Let’s look at the definitions of **FORGIVE.**

**DEFINITIONS OF FORGIVE:**

Webster’s New World Dictionary, 3rd College Edition:

To give up resentment or the desire to punish; stop being angry with; pardon.

 To give up all claim to punish or exact penalty for (an offense); overlook.

 To cancel or remit (a debt).

 Synonym: ABSOLVE

Anchor Bible Dictionary, Vol. 2, Copyright 1992

 **Forgiveness** is the wiping out of an offense from memory; it can be affected only by the one affronted. Once eradicated, the offense no longer conditions

 the relationship between the offender and the one affronted, and harmony is

 restored between the two…

 **Forgiveness** is more than acquitting of guilty; **it remits sin!** The Bible

 Stresses both human forgiveness and divine forgiveness; the latter is the

 divine act by which the removal of sin and its consequences is affected.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

* Why is **Forgiving** the 2nd Greatest Demonstration of Love in the Bible’s View?

Luke 6:37b “Forgive others and you will be forgiven.”

 Deuteronomy 32:35 “Vengeance is mine…”

 Romans 12:19 “Never take your own Revenge”

 Hebrew 10:30 “For we know Him who said, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay.’”

 Luke 23:34 “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.”

 Acts 7:60 “Lord, don’t charge them with this sin!” (With that, Stephen died.)

 *Comment: It brings our life into line with Jesus example, as Stephen did.*

* Is **Forgiving** an option?

 *Have the following verses read*: (Preface the first one with the story of the professor who stamped his foot when he taught something that was to be on

 the final exam, likening Jesus to our teacher before *HIS FINAL EXAM*.

 *Tabbed Bible Students Read* [Matt 6:12,14,15\*; Mark 11:25; Luke 17:3,4]

 \*If you withhold forgiveness, one writer says,

God withholds His Grace from you. IF God withholds His Grace from us, the unforgiveness we harbor in our hearts can destroy us inside – even kill us.

Matthew 18:21-35 Read it (attached), Let me read the comment in the final verse of this series from the Mathew volume from The Complete Biblical Library:

Matt 18:35 QUOTE: Being forgiven from God must lead – indeed requires – one to have a forgiving attitude toward others. If such an attitude does not develop, the unmerciful servant incurs judgment once again

 (cf. 6:14,15).

 Forgiving must come from the heart. Forgiveness cannot be with the lips only (cf. 15:8) or with provisions. Forgiving a brother who has gone astray should be a genuine delight for the believer.

 Forgiveness also means a complete pardon so that no longer is the person considered or treated as guilty. Unlimited forgiveness thus becomes one evidence that an individual actually has put his faith in Jesus, that He has really and truly accepted the forgiveness and salvation He purchased for us on Calvary. If a person is born again and old things have passed away and all things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17), then there will be a new spirit of forgiveness. Ephesians 4:32 uses a form of the Greek word for “forgiving” that urges Christians to keep on forgiving one another graciously. Every time they pray the Lord’s Prayer they ask God to forgive them as they forgive others (6:12). This does not mean that their relationship with God depends on their own works. But forgiving one another does keep the channel of grace open. UNQUOTE.

 1 Corinthians 11:27-30 Read it (attached). Question: Do you think that Unforgiveness dishonors the Body of Christ? This is a serious matter.

 It appears that some have become ill or died because they dishonored the

 Body of Christ – and Unforgiveness is one way to Dishonor Jesus’ body.

As stated just a bit ago, Unforgiveness denies His Grace and allows unforgiveness to “eat up” our body from the inside; it can kill us – literally...

Alright – let’s look at some lighter verses:

Ephesians 4:32 “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.”

 To do so shows real love to those who hurt us – just as Jesus showed us His great love through His forgiving us.

…and John 13:34,35 “So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”

 Again – is **Forgiving** an option? **The answer is a Resounding NO!!!**

 **WHY?** – Because of the scriptures read so far, and these and many more…

 Psalm 86:5 “O Lord, you are so good, so ready to forgive, so full of

 unfailing love for all who ask for your help.”

 Psalm 99:8 “O Lord our God, you answered them. You were a forgiving

 God to them, but you punished them when they went wrong.”

* What about **forgiveness of self?**

 How about the person who says “God’s forgiven me, I know, but I can’t

 forgive myself.” Why could an inability (or unwillingness) to forgive

 oneself actually be considered by God as the height of arrogance?

* Why is it **essential to fully Forgive**?

 Have volunteers read… *Tabbed Bible Students Read*

Psalm 103:10-12; Is 38:17c, Mic 7:19c

 **Must henceforth never bring up the offense to:**

1. **Offender, 2) a Confidant, 3) God, or 4) Self**
* Let’s Discuss when we should **Forgive**?

 Psalm 4:4 “Don’t sin by letting anger control you. Think about it

 overnight and remain silent.”

 Ephesians 4:26 “And don’t sin by letting anger control you! Don’t let

 the sun go down while you are still angry.”

Let’s take it to an even higher level -

What about a perpetual attitude of forgiving, of forbearance, even

before the offense? Isn’t that Jesus’ attitude then and now?

**To Do So Requires:**

**Willingness to Forgive,**

**God’s Holy Spirit,** and

**Practice.**

**CLOSE**

Perhaps the greatest reason God has not brought Revival to our increasingly

sin-ravaged land though we all desperately want it, is that there is UNREPENTANT UNFORGIVENESS BETWEEN BELIEVERS IN THE CHURCH. We have met the enemy. He is us – our prideful flesh.

Look at John 13:34,35 again – Love each other as I have loved you!

*Close with word by word explanation of the central part of 2 Chronicles 7:13-14.*

**…if each person in the church will…**

 **Humble,**

 **Pray,**

 **Seek His face,**

 **turn from our wicked ways…**

**…He will hear,**

 **Forgive,**

 **Heal our land… HALLELUJAH!!!**

**But why, church? Why** do we let sin – unforgiveness – obstruct our

repenting and the revival that often follows?

Because of our **EGO, that vilest of sin.** “For all that is in the world, the

 LUST OF THE FLESH and the

 LUST OF THE EYES and the

 BOASTFUL PRIDE OF LIFE is not from the Father,

 but is from the world [1 John 2:16 - NASB]

(Read Again in NLT: “For the world offers only a craving for physical

 pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and our possessions.

 These are not from the Father, but are from this world.”

Our EGO and its sin **blinds us** to do what we know in our Hearts

we **must** do – and that is to:

**RUN, NOT WALK, TO EVERY BROTHER and SISTER WHOM WE HAVE OFFENDED AND SEEK THEIR FORGIVENESS**…and to

**RUN, NOT WALK, TO EVERY BROTHER and SISTER WHO HAS**

**OFFENDED US AND FORGIVE THEM EVEN WITHOUT THEM ASKING.**

We must humble ourselves before all in the church if we would see God once

again pleased with us – the very ones whom He said would be known by

the Love we are supposed to show one another. [John 13:34,35 again]

The beginning and ending of LOVE is **to Forgive, to Forgive, and to Forgive.**

**Jesus did it – and still does…**

**How much more should we (who are far from perfect) forgive???**

**Let’s pray.**

Scripture To Be Read by Students

Have Students Read:

Matthew 6:12,14,15

Mark 11:25

Luke 17:3,4

John 13:34,35 “So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are

 my disciples.”

Have Students Read:

Psalm 103:10-12

Isaiah 38:17c

Micah 7:19c