A SEASON FOR-GIVING

December 18, 2011

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.
Ephesians 4:32

There is a story of a servant who owed the King $10,000,000...

One day, the King called this man in to settle his account with him. In those times, if you didn't have the means to repay a debt, your family and possessions were sold to make a payment. Then, you were thrown into prison until you paid the last cent. (I'm still trying to figure out how you pay anything while you're in prison)

Knowing he didn't have that kind of money, the man fell to the ground and begged for mercy; crying that he could never, in ten million lifetimes, pay back such a debt. He pleaded with the King, "Have patience with me, and I will repay you everything." The King, seeing the servant's utter desperation, forgave him the debt in FULL!

The servant was overjoyed, but his gratitude was short lived as he immediately went to find one of his fellow servants who owed him 100 denarii, the *equivalent of $20. When he found his fellow servant, he began to choke him and say, "Pay back what you owe!" His fellow servant fell down and started to beg, "Have patience with me and I will repay you." The freshly-forgiven man was unwilling to forgive the $20 owed to him and proceeded to throw the man in prison! WOW! How can anyone be so ungrateful, so unmerciful, so mean?

As I told this story from Matthew 18 to a young woman, she was furious with the guy who was forgiven so much then was unwilling to forgive so little. All of us are furious with that kind of behavior, and yet, this happens everyday. God has forgiven us a debt we could NEVER, in a million years repay. We walk away saved, forgiven and free; then we have the nerve to withhold forgiveness from those of our fellow humans who have wronged us to the tune of fifty bucks! Don't get me wrong. I'm not minimizing some of the atrocities that have been committed against people by others, but in reality, nothing anyone has ever done to us could compare to the debt we owe God.

God so loved the world that HE GAVE..

This is the season that we celebrate that gift to us. We know that we can be forgiven by God for all of our sins just by asking, but at what cost did this forgiveness come? Most people have heard John 3:16, '*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life*.' Does that Scripture only apply to the crucifixion of Christ, or could it also have to do with the fact that 'He gave His Son' to be born? Jesus was born on the earth so that 'whosoever' would come to Him could be forgiven, would be saved. Christmas is all about the birth of the 'Way' for us to be forgiven. God is holy and God is just. According to His own law He must punish sin. The wages of (all) sin is death (Rom. 6:23). He also declares that 'all have sinned.' (Rom. 3:23) Notice the last part of Romans 6:23, 'but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.' The free GIFT of forgiveness was born in Bethlehem more than 2000 years ago. Because Jesus lived a perfect life (He never sinned), He was the only acceptable sacrifice to the Father. He was the spotless lamb prophesied in the Old Testament. He was the only One worthy to pay the sin debt of all mankind.

We're Better Than That!

When Jesus died on the cross He took upon Himself the sins of the world, present and future, making it possible for 'whosoever believes in Him' to be forgiven and have eternal life. WOW! If you know this forgiveness, then you know that you could never hold anyone else's sin against them. We've been forgiven way too much. Because of the grace of God shown to us, we're better than that.

The Tormentors

If we do choose to hold another's sin against them, Jesus tells us in Matthew 18:34-35 what will happen to us. "And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him." This sounds extremely harsh, but have you ever seen the effects that bitterness and unforgiveness can have on a person? It can actually change the way we look! I've heard it said that, "Resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die." If that's not torture, I don't know what is. Jesus told us the Parable of the King and the Servants because He knows we are helpless and ineffective for His Kingdom when we hold unforgiveness toward another, not to mention that we are literally tormented, 'put in prison until we pay the last cent.'

The Gift, Forgiveness

This Christmas season, may I encourage you to give the gift of forgiveness? If you can't do it for the other person, do it for yourself. We need to be free from bondage if we are going to rightly represent our King Jesus. Besides, God has forgiven us a trillion dollars and our fellow man only owes us fifty bucks in comparison. We should stop choking him or her, stop trying to keep them in prison. We're really only hurting ourselves.

Merry Christmas

I can tell you from experience that 'letting someone go' from a debt they owe me feels a lot better than holding on to it. As Christians, we have the key to the prison. If we let them out, we let ourselves out. Be free today. Re-open that gift of forgiveness the Lord gave to you at first. Remember where you were, how you were. Meditate on the grace of God that was shown to you, and give this gift of forgiveness to someone this Christmas.

After all, this is a season for-giving.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!
Grace & Peace,
Big D

**After searching the internet for the value of 100 denarii, twenty dollars was the best answer I could find.*