**Forgiving from the Heart**

*by Jerry Fite*

Jesus concluded his parable highlighting forgiveness by saying, “So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not everyone his brother from your hearts” (Matthew 18:35). Forgiving from the heart denotes a sincere and genuine forgiveness. But here our heart is made aware of a sobering thought. What will my heavenly Father do unto me, if I do not forgive from the heart?

We are to forgive from a heart knowing God will not forgive us if we do not genuinely forgive others. This is the point of the parable (Matthew 18:23-35). A servant owes the king 10,000 talents and cannot immediately pay the debt. Pleading for patience, the servant receives compassion from the king who forgives him of the debt. When released of his debt, he finds a fellow servant who owes him 100 shillings. He rigorously demands payment. He does not forgive with compassion, even though he was forgiven by the king far more than what his fellow servant owed him. His king, when learning of his servant’s unwillingness to forgive, demands what was owed him. This is where Jesus’ summary statement is made. We must forgive others knowing God will not forgive us when we need forgiveness (Matthew 6:14-15).

Forgiving from the heart is a heart that is not calculating the wrongs done, but is a heart always ready to forgive. Peter asked, “How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him…” No doubt thinking magnanimously, Peter immediately adds, “until seven times?” Jesus follows the line of thinking, but takes it to a different meaning. Jesus says not seven but the complete number 7 multiplied by 10 times 7. Jesus is not saying that one must forgive 490 times, but the limit is reached at this point and one does not have to forgive the 491st time. He is saying the heart is ready always to forgive.

What is the limit of your forgiveness? If one wrongs you once and you forgive; and then wrongs you a second time, and you forgive; you are probably at your limit. Does it not make you look foolish to keep on being wronged and you respond with forgiveness? After all, does not the world think in terms, “fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me”. But forgiving from the heart involves being always ready to forgive, not having a certain limit to forgiveness. Forgiving from the heart, is a heart knowledgeable of how God forgives. While always ready to forgive, God does not forgive until we repent (Acts 8:22). As God has forgiven us, we are to forgive others with a “tender” and “kind” heart (Ephesians 4:32). While we should always be ready to forgive, “if he repent, forgive him” is the godlike way we should forgive from the heart (Luke 17:3).

We must forgive as God forgives, being ready to forgive the penitent with compassion. We will forgive with a heart never to apply the wrong again. When your heart says “I just cannot forgive anymore,” tell yourself, “Do I want God to quit forgiving me?” He will, if we quit forgiving from the heart those who sin against us!

**Meaning of Contentment**

*by Jerry Fite*

Paul reminds us that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And, in order to avoid many sorrows and more importantly, the falling away from the faith, we are to cultivate the attitude of godliness with contentment. Money is not our gain, but “godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Timothy 6:6).

Contentment is experiencing the events of life with the attitude that we are “sufficient” for the occasion. Paul says “having food and covering, we shall therewith be content” (1 Timothy 6:8). What this means, is that I look at my situation and see that my basic needs are being supplied. I have a roof over my head, and food in my stomach. Therefore, I am good for another day. But wonder if that roof over my head is a cardboard box, and the food is just half a sandwich. Must I feel sufficient for the moment? Yes, I need to be content, but this does not mean I must like my present situation.

Some will equate “contentment” and “like”. But they are not the same. One, in order to be content, must not necessarily like the situation he or she is in. I do not have to like the fact that my covering is a box and my meal for the day is half of a sandwich, but I am to think that for this moment, I have food and covering and will be content.

The soldiers in John’s day were to be “content with their wages.” This does not mean they had to like what they were making, and never ask for a raise, but that they were to be sufficient for the moment. They were not to allow greed to move them to use their position of power and “extort” from others “by force” or “accuse any one wrongfully” in order to satisfy discontent with their wages. They did not have to like their wages, but they were to be content with their wages.

Paul was in prison when he wrote about his contentment. “Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content” (Philippians 2:11). Surely, Paul did not like the fact that he was in prison, and not able to be free to spread the gospel, but he was content. He was sufficient for the moment and even was able to teach those he was around in prison (Philippians 1:13, 4:22, Ephesians 6:19-20).

Contentment was not about how much Paul had, for he learned how to be content regardless if he was “abased” or living in “abundance” (Philippians 4:12). It was about “sufficiency.” He was sufficient for any occasion because he lived in the Lord. Paul says, “I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13). Regardless of how much or how little, Paul had the Lord with him to make him sufficient for the moment.

Life can be difficult when you are facing financial issues, or health issues. You are pinching pennies here and cutting back there. It is not a pleasant experience, and sometimes very difficult. When you have lost some of your health, and the remedial treatments make you weak and sick, it is often demoralizing. Contentment does not mean that you have to like the fact that you have lower wages or that you are not enjoying the health you once had, but it is about looking on your present situation and knowing you have the Lord with you strengthening you along the way. He is here with you. With him you can be sufficient for anything, even those things you do not like.