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Daily Devotional - Thursday, July 19, 2018 - Jesus: A Servant

JULY 19TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Thursday, July 19, 2018 - Jesus: A Servant

Matthew 20:20-28

Believers like to talk about Jesus as Lord, Master, and especially Savior, but rarely is He mentioned as Servant. Yet describing His own mission, Christ said, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28). He entered the world to offer Himself for the Father’s purpose and mankind’s need.

Because every human being is born enslaved to sin, Jesus came to set us free. He voluntarily exchanged His glory for flesh because only as a human could He die in our place to pay the penalty for our sin. The greatest service He offered was His sacrifice on the cross. He allowed His purity to be violated by our transgressions. In fact, God made Jesus “who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf” so that we could gain His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Our sinless Savior suddenly and painfully felt the burden of guilt, the vileness of sin, the weight of a tarnished soul, and a wretched separation from His Father. He suffered the injustice of dying for our sins in order that God’s holiness and our imperfection could be reconciled, and we could be shown mercy.

Jesus was the Father’s servant, agreeing to an atonement plan that made Him a sacrifice. And He is your servant as well—He humbly endured the punishment you deserved. To receive the

benefit of His sacrifice, you need only believe and call on Him for the forgiveness of your sins. When you receive Him into your life, then you too will know the Servant, Jesus Christ, as Savior and Lord

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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, July 18, 2018 - An Unforgiving Spirit

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Matthew 18:21-35

Because of man's propensity to sin, we're surrounded by opportunities to forgive others. Perhaps we've been unfairly criticized, disappointed by a broken promise, or harmed financially or physically. In this broken world, the list of wrongdoings is endless. The question is: How are we to deal with the offenses of others?

Peter was wondering the same thing, so He asked Jesus how often he should forgive a brother who sins against him. He probably thought he was being very generous by suggesting, "Up to seven times?" But Jesus replied, "Up to seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:21-22). In other words, forgive every single time you're wronged. Forgiveness doesn't mean finding reasons to justify or excuse someone's behavior, nor is it about forgetting what happened or pretending it never occurred.

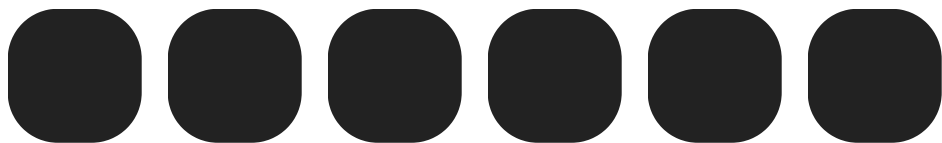
Genuine forgiveness requires deliberate action on our part. While acknowledging that a wrong has been committed, we choose to release the offender from any obligation toward us and surrender our perceived right to hurt him or her back. In essence, we're no longer holding the unfair, hurtful behavior against the person but are extending mercy, just as God has done toward us.

The only alternative is to hold onto anger and bitterness. Though we may think we are punishing the wrongdoer, we're actually hurting ourselves. Resentment is like sludge that contaminates the mind, clogs the heart, and poisons the soul. Untreated anger turns into bitterness, which hinders our relationship with God and others and leaves us vulnerable to Satan's attacks (Eph. 4:26-27). The only remedy is forgiveness.

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, July 17, 2018 - Choosing to Forgive

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Ephesians 4:31-32

Isn't it interesting that young children generally don't hold grudges? They may cry and throw tantrums, but once their anger has been vented, they let it go. Adults, however, have a tendency to hang on to offenses. When people wrong us or our loved ones, we want them to pay for what they've done, to suffer as we have. It only seems fair to expect restitution of some kind, and unless that occurs, we withhold forgiveness.

As Christians, however, we are called to a different standard and way of thinking—one that's consistent with God's character. He is a merciful Father who wants His children to show mercy to others (Luke 6:36). His Son's life on earth demonstrated this. As Jesus hung on the cross, He prayed for those who crucified Him, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). God expects us to forgive as Jesus did, regardless of circumstances.

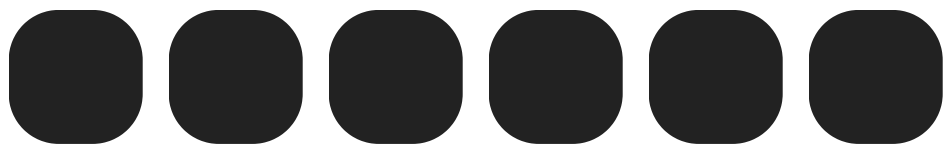
This command seems impossible to carry out until we start to grasp the enormity of what took place on the cross. Christ's death made us recipients of a mercy so great it defies comprehension. The Savior took all our sin upon Himself and died in our place. He experienced the outpouring of God's wrath so we might be forgiven and reconciled to the Father. Although we deserve condemnation, through Jesus Christ we have instead received God's mercy.

Now as new creations in Christ who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we have His power to truly let go of the wrongs done to us and extend mercy to others, just as God has given mercy to us.

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Daily Devotional - Monday, July 16, 2018 - Let Christ Bear Your Burdens

JULY 16TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Monday, July 16, 2018 - Let Christ Bear Your Burdens

Matthew 11:28-30

Jesus' compassion is displayed repeatedly throughout the Gospel accounts, and in today's passage, He shows loving concern by inviting us to come to Him for relief. Is there anything more needed in this world than the feeling of being set free from whatever is weighing us down?

Jesus invites us to come, take His yoke upon us, and learn from Him. At first glance, a yoke may sound like an additional burden, but to understand what Jesus means, we must look at these verses from their historical context. A yoke was a bar that fit over the neck and shoulders of two animals. When a heavy load had to be transported, two oxen were yoked together, thereby distributing the weight evenly between them.

What our Lord is describing is a lifelong process that encompasses coming to Him for salvation and learning to know Him—His perfect character, His priorities for life, and His plans for us and the world. Jesus is asking us to place ourselves under the yoke of His lordship. He promises that a life of submission will fit us well and provide relief.

Our Savior offers to be with us in every trial we face. Sometimes He removes the difficulties that weigh us down, while at other times, He lifts the burdensome feelings that accompany our trials. But there will be occasions when He walks with us through the hardships and suffering, giving us the grace and strength to endure. Even then we will discover that His yoke is easy and His burden is light because His compassion and mighty power carry us through.

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Daily Devotional - Friday, July 13, 2018 - What Christ's Blood Does for Believers

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Romans 3:21-26

Knowing what we believe is key to a life-sustaining faith. Yesterday we saw two of the blessings that are ours through the blood of the Savior. Today we will look at two more.

By trusting in Christ as Savior, we are ...

Justified. Justification is the process by which God sees us as not guilty—just as if we had not committed any wrong. Romans 3:23 condemns all mankind as sinners who are under a sentence of death and facing a dreadful eternity apart from God and His blessings. But everything changes for the person who accepts Christ's shed blood as payment for his or her sins—through Jesus, that sinner is declared “not guilty” and is provided with Christ's righteousness. And the new believer is adopted into God's own family (Gal. 3:26). Jesus' sacrifice has satisfied our sin debt, and His death is counted by God as our own (Rom. 5:9).

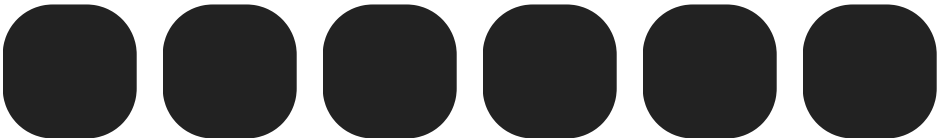
Reconciled. Before salvation, we were separated from the Lord and spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1). We had no way to span the gap between Him and us. Christ sent His Holy Spirit to convict us of our guilt (John 16:8), make us aware that we need a Savior, and bring us to saving faith. Jesus, the Lamb of God, removed the barrier of sin that separated us from God. Christ died to reconcile us to God, “having made peace through the blood of His cross” (Col. 1:20).

As believers, we should understand what occurred when we received Jesus as Savior. Through His sacrifice, we are redeemed, forgiven, justified, and reconciled to God. That is, Christ’s blood has brought us from death to life—and has let us enter into an eternal relationship with the Father.

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