

A Mighty Change of Heart (<http://mightychangeofheart.com>)

"And now behold, I ask of you, my brethren of the church, have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?" Alma 5:14

Chapter 20 – The Forgiving Attitude

CHAPTER 20

THE FORGIVING ATTITUDE

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (Matt 6:14, 15)

To be able to forgive another is something that takes place in the recesses of the mind. It requires little or no physical effort. It is an attitude — one that is absolutely essential if we are to live the gospel of Jesus Christ. To develop a forgiving attitude is extremely important. Why? Because if we don't, all of the gospel ordinances can be canceled. Baptism is for the remission of sins, but the Lord has said that if we are not willing to forgive those who have trespassed against us, then He will not forgive us our transgressions against Him. If we have hard feelings against anyone, an unforgiving attitude, then our baptism is not valid. It may as well have been performed by someone who didn't have the proper authority.

If our baptism is not valid due to an unforgiving attitude then what about our eternal marriage covenant which took place in the house of the Lord? Can it possibly be valid if our baptismal ordinance isn't?

Being offended is what necessitates having to forgive. If we never are offended then we never have to forgive. Life is made up of a system of action and interaction between individuals, organizations and governments. The possibilities of injustice or alleged injustice are numberless; therefore the possibilities of being offended are about like the number of stars in the heavens. If a person decides to specialize in being offended, his soul will fill with hate, anger, resentment and despair. Although these are the outward manifestations of offense the underlying problem is really a LACK OF FAITH IN GOD.

The opportunities to forgive are unlimited. Peter understood this well when he asked of the Master,

...Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven. (Matt 18:21, 22)

Technically that's 490 times, but I believe that the Lord is saying that we should forgive always. It's like a mathematical equation. Both sides must be balanced. We should be willing to forgive the number of times that we are offended.

Jesus continued His instructions as follows:

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his Lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment be made.

The servant therefore fell down, and worshiped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. (Matt 18:23-26)

This relationship represents the one which each of us has with the King who is our Heavenly Father. It represents the debt that we owe to Him. Has He not provided the earth, the air, the water and made the conditions favorable for each of us? How much do we owe Him? We owe Him a considerable amount — ten thousand talents.

Then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

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

So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their Lord all that was done.

Then his Lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee? (Matt 18:27-33)

This represents the relationship that we have with each other. The debts are very small that we owe each other. The Lord said to his servant, "If you will forgive the small debt you are owed I'll forgive the large debt that you owe to me." If the servant that owed the large debt had understood the consequences perhaps he would have been more forgiving for,

And his Lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should PAY ALL THAT WAS DUE UNTO HIM.

So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. (Matt 18:34-35)

It begins to become apparent that when we desire a blessing from the Lord the inability to forgive can cause the Lord to withhold the blessing. It can also cause our faith to become inoperable. We begin to feel guilty and our faith vanishes. If we are to develop a healthy relationship with the Master, we must forgive our neighbor

his trespasses. The Lord made this very plain when he pointed to the difference between the law of Moses and the new law which He brought.

Ye had heard that it hath been said by them of old time that, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment of God.

But I say unto you, that whosoever is ANGRY WITH HIS BROTHER, shall be in danger of HIS judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Therefore, if ye shall come unto me, or shall desire to come unto me, or if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there REMEMBEREST THAT THY BROTHER HATH AUGHT AGAINST THEE, Leave thou thy gift before the altar, and go thy way UNTO THY BROTHER, and FIRST BE RECONCILED TO THY BROTHER, and THEN come and offer thy gift. (Matt 5:23-26 Inspired Version)

That's difficult doctrine, for most of us, but the Lord made it very plain. If we come to offer our tithes, fast offerings or any other gifts to the Lord and our hearts are filled with anger, hatred, revenge or bitterness toward any of our brothers or sisters, then the gift will not be acceptable to the Lord. Most of us go right ahead and offer the gift hoping that we can buy the Lord off, but that isn't the way it works. After all, it is difficult to straighten out years of bitterness and resentment. When we finally develop the courage through fasting and prayer to do it the way the Lord describes, then years of unforgiveness, bitterness and resentment can be swept away. We can then come to harmony with each other and thus be prepared to become one with the Lord.

The inability to forgive is one of the most damaging things that can happen to the character and personality of an individual. From this inability is spawned anger, hatred, revenge, bitterness, resentment and the attitude that "he got just what he deserved". Economically it causes loss of employment, slowdowns in production, and even sabotage. In the home it causes tension, run-away youth and divorce. In the church it causes jealousy, distrust, anger, apathy and apostasy. It is like some kind of monster that feeds on itself. People actually reach the point where they begin to feed on evil. They actually begin to enjoy the hatred and revenge as they rush headlong toward the "great and terrible day of the Lord." For people who are in this condition perhaps this experience will help. The story was told this way:

Two men, both active members of the church, over the years developed a real antagonism toward each other. It appeared to each that the other was at fault, but neither made any attempt to correct the situation. Each time they had occasion to be near the other in any relationship of any kind the tension increased. Each seemed to go out of their way to hurt the other one. They lived in the same ward, but they studiously avoided each other when in the house of the Lord, but the tension and hatred were there. Yes, they even brought it to church with them. One would use one exit and one the other. This condition existed and grew worse and worse over a period of fifteen years. None of the teachings of the church seemed to enter into their hardened hearts, but they continued to be active in the church. Hate fed on hate, bitterness on bitterness and revenge on revenge as the condition worsened. After a period of fifteen years the Lord finally tired of the situation.

One day the Lord, through the power of the Holy Ghost, spoke to one of the individuals. He said that the Lord said to him, "It's time for you to CONFESS your sins." That was new doctrine to him, but he decided he had better obey. He selected a place of privacy in his own home and got down on his knees to pray. In his thoughts he went back to the time when he was eight years of age and began to dredge up the sins of his past life and confess them to the Lord in detail. He didn't know that CONFESSION OF SINS was part of repentance. He thought that belonged to some other church. It took a lot of praying to get through the whole

list of sins. And it got extremely difficult when it reached the point of hating this particular brother, but he did it. He said, “Lord, I hate my own brother. I’ve hated him for a long time, but you may as well know that I still hate him. I know that makes me a hypocrite, but I hate him anyway and I can’t get the hate out of my system.” Well, this confession was given to the Lord, but the Lord didn’t accept it. The next day he went to the Lord in prayer and did it all over again. This time the Lord reminded him of some sins which he had forgotten. So he added them to the confession list. The Lord didn’t accept this confession either. He still wasn’t relieved of this burden — the inability to forgive. He sought the Lord again in prayer and went through the whole sordid mess again. Again the Lord dredged up some old sins that had been forgotten — some that were important enough to keep him from the full effects of the atonement. He confessed them to the Lord. The Lord still didn’t accept the confession, but he was unaware of that anyway. He didn’t even know why he was confessing them to the Lord other than he had been instructed to do so. Two days later he decided to confess again but this time the Holy Ghost came upon him in power. He described the burning love of God which he felt — the voice of the Spirit saying to him, “You have received a remission of your sins.” But there was one thing of which he seemed to be certain. All of the BITTERNESS, HATRED, REVENGE and RESENTMENT which he had had for that particular individual was gone. Not only was it gone, it was replaced with LOVE. He had heard it taught that repentance was a gift from God, but now he knew it was. He had been absolutely unable to overcome this hatred, but in an instant the Lord had taken it out of his system and replaced it with love. He no longer hated the man. He loved him. Remember the words of the Master:

My disciples, in days of old, sought occasion against one another and forgave not one another in their hearts; and for this evil they were afflicted and sorely chastened.

Wherefore, I say unto you, that YE OUGHT TO FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER: for he that FORGIVETH NOT HIS BROTHER HIS TRESPASSES standeth condemned before the Lord: FOR THERE REMAINETH IN HIM THE GREATER SIN.

*I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of **YOU, IT IS REQUIRED to FORGIVE ALL MEN.** (D&C 64:8-10)*

If you have a problem with forgiveness, your faith in the Lord should surely be equal to that problem now. If you’ll go back and review the chapters entitled “The Lord’s Part in Repentance” and “The Remission of Sins”, perhaps you’ll see it more clearly. If you have had trouble forgiving, why not do as the man did in the above story, and let the Lord handle it for you. **After all, NOTHING is impossible to Him.**

Do you believe that?

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