

# Wednesday, March 17

Today's Reading: Matthew Chapter 18

Today's Devotional Message is by Pastor Paul Baehmann

*Then Peter came to Him and asked, "Lord how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven Times?" "No, not seven times, " Jesus replies, "but seventy times seven!" Matthew 18:21-22*

Jesus is concerned not only about the relationship between Him and us, but also about our relationship with our fellow human beings. He wants people to be able to care about each other and to live in peace. But we are sinners, and so will often do or say something that will hurt another person or they will hurt us resulting in a broken relationship. The only way for any relationship to be restored is if the offended person offers forgiveness to the offender.

This is what Jesus is concerned about in our reading today. He wants us who have been forgiven for any and all sins by God to forgive whoever sins against us. It makes no difference how often they offend us, He expects, yes He commands, and we should say demands that we forgive those who sin against us. In the parable which follows these verses Jesus clearly warns us that if we refuse to forgive, our refusal creates a problem between Him and us. The problem lies not within Him but within us. God is always ready to forgive, but He cannot enter an unforgiving heart. The door is barred against Him. To say it another way, God loves us and wants to forgive, but He cannot forgive an unforgiving person because when a person is unforgiving that person closes their life against God.

So we who have been freely forgiven must daily be about the business of forgiving others. Many times that's easier said than done. It's not so hard if the offense is minor and if the person says, "I'm sorry." It's much harder when the offense is repeated, when there is no apology, or when we can see it was done intentionally. Even harder still is when the loss seems unbearable such as in cases of rape and murder. Even then the command is there to forgive. Is God being unreasonable? Not at all; He knows that the only way we can ever get any relief and peace back into our life again is when and if we forgive whatever was done to us.

There is freedom in forgiveness. The rape victim continues to be raped in their mind until they forgive that terrible thing that was done to them. Until they forgive they remain a victim and actually live in a self made prison. It's been said that, "to forgive is to set the prisoner free and then discover that the prisoner was you."

Prayer: Lord Jesus, when You were being put to death You showed Your great love for human beings by forgiving those who nailed You to the cross. Help me as I go through this life to be able to follow Your example and to forgive any and all who sin against me. Amen.