

20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning Week 28 (July 5-11, 2015)

We will spend one more week on the subject of forgiveness toward our brothers and sisters.

Sunday, July 5 (read Ephesians 4:29-32)

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. (Ephesians 4:29)

One of the consequences of an unforgiving spirit is a tendency to gossip about your brother or sister. Those who choose to make a **public** problem out of a **private** situation are not following the command of the printed verse above, which gives the standard for talking to others. Your job is to build them up, not tear them down. This verse has been my goal for more than 20 years. Along the way, I have tried some drastic measures in order to fulfill its command. I went through an entire year **fasting** the next meal after someone caught me in violation of the verse. I did lose about 25 pounds, but even with that, I found that this is an extremely difficult goal, especially for someone like me who loves to talk. Will you join me in taking this verse seriously? It all starts with forgiving one another in Christ!

Monday, July 6 (reread Ephesians 4:29-32)

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)

We grieve the Holy Spirit when we badmouth someone for whom Christ died (v. 30). Therefore, we must “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander along with every form of malice” (v. 31). All of these vile words and actions start with an unforgiving spirit. Paul gives us the only example of total forgiveness that can motivate us to follow these commands: “forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (v. 32). Were you worthy of Christ’s forgiveness? Is anyone worthy of it? Has someone wronged you so badly that he/she deserves to be shunned forever? Please pray for God to help you forgive those who have sinned against you.

Tuesday, July 6 (read Ephesians 5:1-2)

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children . . . (Ephesians 5:1)

Jesus loved all the citizens of the world enough to lay down His life for them (see John 15:13). Now, He asks **us** to love everyone in our lives **just as He loves us** (v. 2). His love is consistent and not dependent on our words or actions (see Romans 8:38-39), even though we will recognize the fullness of His love only when we obey Him and His Word (see Psalm 51:10-12). With the teachings of the past few days firmly planted in our minds and hearts, do we have any excuse for failing to forgive our brother or sister? Someday, we will stand in His presence to give an account of our words and deeds. Start preparing today by forgiving anyone who has hurt or angered you.

Wednesday, July 7 (read 1 John 3:1-10)

Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother. (1 John 3:10b)

The material you read today refers to habitual sin, a lifestyle that does not reflect the life of God in His child. We all sin in word, thought or deed, but none of us should be living a **lifestyle** of sin (v. 3-9). My narrow focus in this devotion, however, is the relationship you have with your earthly or spiritual brother or sister. God says that we can “know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are” by the way we live and by the way we relate to our brothers and sisters (v. 10). If that is shocking to you, maybe it is time to take this passage seriously. God will help you as you seek to let go of past grudges and truly love your brother or sister.

Thursday, July 8 (read 1 John 3:11-15)

Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him. (1 John 3:15)

The first death that took place in our world resulted from **jealousy** between brothers (Genesis 4:1-10). Many family conflicts today come from the same source. When one brother is more successful, popular or powerful, jealousy often raises its ugly head. This is only one of many potential problems that occur in families, whether it is a birth family or the Christian family. God’s Word tells us that hating your brother is the same as murdering him (see Matthew 5:22). Worse yet, no murderer actually has eternal life abiding within (v. 15). Isn’t it about time that we take our earthly relationships seriously in light of God’s Word? Can you afford to try to fit that grudge through the gate of heaven?

Friday, July 9 (read 1 John 3:16-20)

If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? (1 John 3:17)

Today’s passage goes beyond our **attitudes** toward our brother and deals with our **actions**. Our example, as always, is Jesus Christ who laid down His life for us so that we can make a willful choice to lay our lives down for one another. It is usually natural and easy for a parent to lay down his/her life for a child, but this passage is talking about our brothers and sisters in Christ as well as our natural family. We are told to hold every possession in an **open hand** so that we can assist others who lack the very necessities of life. Once again, God reminds us that this is not an option, but rather a litmus test to see that we belong to the Truth (v. 19). The Holy Spirit lives within every true believer. His job is to convict us of our sins and misdeeds. Listen to your heart! It will tell you when you are acting wrongly!

Saturday, July 10 (read 1 John 3:21-24)

Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from Him anything we ask, because we obey His commands and do what pleases Him. (1 John 3:21-22)

Wow! What a promise! If the Holy Spirit is allowed to examine our hearts daily, and if there is no **willful** sin lurking inside, we can approach God’s throne with confidence (see also Hebrews 4:16) and expect to receive from Him whatever we ask for! Isn’t that reason enough to forgive your brother and to love him as Jesus loves him? We are commanded to believe in the Son and to love one another (v. 23). If we are doing those two things, God’s Spirit abides within and we are as assured of heaven as though we were already there (v. 24)! Hallelujah!