

- On April 15, 2015, in a Fall River, Massachusetts court room, Ursula Ward stood up before a judge, the jury, family, friends and the man who was just convicted of murdering her son, Odin Lloyd. As you could imagine, there are many things that could be said by Mrs. Ward during this address. She could've berated the guilty man for taking her son away from her way too soon. Instead, she chose to take the dignified course. Mrs. Ward said these words before the crowded courtroom. *"The day I laid my son Odin to rest, I felt my heart stop beating for a moment, I felt like I wanted to go into that hole with my son, Odin.....I forgive the hands of the people who had a hand in my son's murder, either before or after. And I pray and hope that someday everyone out there will forgive them also."* Ward went on to say, *"Love makes you grow. In order to grow you have to forgive, you have to be at peace with yourself. I woke up the Sunday morning before the verdict with such joy in my heart and I said this is the day I can let go of the pain. They have taken too much of my life."*
- This type of forgiving spirit should be a defining characteristic of God's people. We should all learn to be so forgiving, even when we have been horribly wronged. But how? How can we learn to have the forgiving spirit that Ursula Ward so passionately displayed even in the face of her son's murderer? I believe that the process of learning forgiveness begins with an examination of our Savior Jesus Christ. If we want to learn forgiveness, then there is no person better to learn from than the perfect Son of God. So this morning, let's learn about forgiveness from our Savior.

I. Jesus commanded forgiveness.

- A. Throughout His ministry, Jesus taught about the importance and necessity of forgiveness from His disciples.
 1. We can look to one of His earliest teachings from the Sermon on the Mount to see this as being an essential part of the character for a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven. **(Matt. 5:7)**
 2. Jesus's model prayer includes the necessity to forgive others. **(Matt. 6:12)**
 3. Later on, Jesus is asked by Peter how often we should forgive others. **(Matt. 18:21)**
 4. Jesus responds by saying that our forgiveness should have no end. **(Matt. 18:22)**
- B. Why should we always be willing to forgive? One of the reasons forgiveness is commanded is because God will not forgive our sins if we are not willing to forgive others of the wrongs they might have committed against us.
 1. We saw this back in **Matthew 6:14,15**. Our Lord was very clear with the fact that those unwilling to forgive should not expect forgiveness for their wrongs.
 2. If we have an end to forgiveness or if we are not willing to forgive others, then our end will be the same as we see for the unforgiving servant of **Matt. 18:23ff**.
 3. If we are not willing to extend forgiveness. If we are not willing to show mercy, then we cannot expect for our God to do the same for us.
 4. We have been guilty of the wrong and we would all desire forgiveness for our mistakes towards others.
 5. We must strive to learn the forgiveness that was taught by our Savior.

II. Jesus demonstrated forgiveness.

- A. Jesus not only taught forgiveness but He also demonstrated it in His life. Jesus's forgiveness towards others on the cross is the ultimate example of forgiveness. **(Luke 23:34)**
 1. They had not asked for forgiveness, but Jesus still desired and was willing to give that for them.
 2. This should lead us to the understanding that forgiveness is more than just the simple ask for it and be given. True forgiveness is an attitude and a mindset.
 3. It is more than the action. Some people may never ask for forgiveness, but we must always be willing to extend that forgiveness towards them.
 4. People can do some pretty horrific things to us. We can be terribly wronged in this life, and that can make it hard to extend forgiveness. So we must ask why? Why must we be willing to give those who have wronged and hurt us?

- B. We must understand that Jesus didn't forgive just to forgive. He forgave with a purpose. He forgave others because He loved others.
1. We should forgive just as Jesus did because that is what love for your neighbor does. **(I Cor. 13:4-7)**
 2. As we strive to be like our Savior, we must recognize that His heart of compassion, love, kindness, and humility should be a part of our character as the "chosen of God." **(Col. 3:12,13)**
 3. In Paul's practical section of **Ephesians**, he details how we will behave and treat others if we are more like our Savior. **(Eph. 3:26-32)**
 4. Our love for one another and our God should be the driving force behind our willingness to forgive others when we have been wronged.

III. Jesus provides forgiveness.

- A. Forgiveness of our sins was made available through Jesus Christ.
1. We recognize that all mankind has wronged our God through sin, and we stand in need of forgiveness of our sins. We are able to gain that forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus and faith in Him. **(Rom. 3:23-26)**
 2. To say that we have no sin and are not in need of forgiveness would make us liars. We need the forgiveness of sins that is only found in Jesus Christ. **(I John 1:8-10)**
 3. It was because of our sins that we became separated from God and in need of forgiveness. Without Jesus we cannot move on from our sins and be joined back to God. Our full faith and trust must be in the power of Jesus and His Grace.
 4. Through our repentance and God's forgiveness, He "forgets" or moves past our sins and holds them against us no longer. **(Heb. 10:14-22)**
- B. From the forgiveness of Jesus, we learn that we can be forgiven of all our sins, and we should be willing to forgive others and move on just the same.
1. When we forgive, we are able to move on and not be stuck in that moment or situation.
 2. That doesn't mean that we are foolish and act as if we were never wronged. That is how we get back into bad situations.
 3. What is meant by moving on is that we don't let that grudge or resentment weight us down and keep us from living a purposeful life for the Lord.
 4. We must be like Paul, who strove to be like Christ, in **Phil 3:13,14** and forget about those things that might hold us back. We must forgive and move past those things and press forward for our God.

Forgiveness is sometimes a very difficult bridge to cross. In this life we will suffer horrible wrongs. We will be hurt by even some of the closest of those to us. May God help us to be more like our Savior. May He help us to remember the perfect teachings and examples of forgiveness that our Lord gave us while on the earth. May God help us to love and forgive just like His Son. May God be glorified when we humbly love others through our forgiveness of their wrongs against us.