



## The Importance of Forgiveness

*“Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.”*

*Matthew 12:31-32*

I heard Sarah Huckabee Sanders speak today. She shared with us stories from her time as the press secretary for Donald Trump. One thing that stood out was how terribly she was treated by people who did not like Donald Trump during the time that she held the job. Receiving death threats regularly, she was assigned a security detail for protection, a first for a Presidential Press Secretary. Then on the news tonight, the Pennsylvania Secretary of State reported that he is receiving death threats from Trump supporters, because Biden has apparently won the vote in that state and Trump’s supporters don’t like it. Other election officials are receiving death threats as well. Trump is like a lightning rod, bringing out the worst on both sides. What is going on?

We might say that Trump is like a king in that he is above reproach not just in his own mind, but in the mind of his followers and supporters. So when things don’t go right, it’s war. And to his detractors, he is also like a king, but a hated and despised king that must be gotten rid of. And when things don’t go as his detractors feel things should go, it’s war for them as well. Both sides are overreacting on a regular basis over just about everything Trump does. Trump has become the symbol of everything right for one group, and everything wrong for the other group. Both sides are routinely making death threats towards the other, hate each other, demonize each other. I suppose Trump loves this, as he has everyone’s attention, including mine. He has truly become the center of attention for the entire United States, and most of the world. It’s actually somewhat amazing when you think about it.

But Trump is no king. Jesus is King, the King of all kings, and He said, “Go ahead, insult me, say whatever you want about me, I will forgive you. You can say or do anything you want, and I will forgive you.” Even while hanging on the cross dying, with the crowd hurling insults at Him, mocking him, soldiers spearing Him in the side, He says “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.” But Trump and his supporters want payback, even for the littlest things. Trump even fired his chief of cybersecurity today simply because he believes he was somehow involved in his election loss. Trump and his supporters won’t accept the fact that he lost the election and are angry, looking for someone to crucify. Jesus willingly went to the cross, but Trump won’t even accept a narrow defeat in an election.

On the other side of things, during the four years of Trump’s tenure as president, we saw some of the worst behavior out of the Democratic party since they started the civil war. People associated with Trump were harassed, received death threats regularly, were asked to leave restaurants, were spit on, insulted in the street, etc. They behaved every bit as poorly as the Trump supporters are behaving now.

So what has happened to our country, when we are divided in such a way that both sides are commonly making death threats towards the other, over things that in the grand scheme of things are really quite insignificant? What has brought us to the point of not being able to even have a discussion over issues without it becoming emotionally charged, often to the point of anger and even violence?

We could actually write a book to answer that question, as there are so many things that are causing this. But for today let's just look at one of the things that is driving this. When Jesus was here, we read in Matthew chapter twelve that He said that we could say whatever we wanted to about Him, and He would forgive us. There was nothing that we could do that was unforgivable. Nothing. The problem lies in our inability to forgive and move on. We cannot move on, because we cannot forgive. We cannot have a rational, peaceful discussion of issues because we cannot forgive. And this is a big deal, especially if we are Christian, because in the Lord's Prayer, Jesus tells us to ask for God to "forgive us as we forgive those who have sinned against us." (Matthew 6:9-13) In the very next verses Jesus says:

*"For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions."*

*Matthew 6:14-15*

In other words, if we don't get this right, we may regret it for the rest of eternity. This is a big deal, to say the least. Jesus set the example, and even said that He will forgive anything. We are to follow His example, and forgive anything. And what better time to do this than right now, at the end of Trump's presidency, with both sides still at each other's throats. It is time for us to be peacemakers (Matthew 5:9) and prove to the world that we really are sons of God.

And what of the part about the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit being unforgiveable you ask? That is for another piece. For now, let's focus on forgiving others, and helping others to forgive the other side. That is what is needed right now. This is a chance for Christians to prove that they really are Christians, by forgiving others and by being the peacemakers that God has called us to be.

*Lord God Almighty, we come before you in Jesus name, and confess that we have not forgiven others as you have forgiven us. We repent of this right now, and pray that you would teach us to forgive others no matter what has happened. We pray that you would use us to promote healing in America, that you would make us operate as peacemakers, helping both sides of the Trump issue to get along with each other and not hate each other. Help us to humanize each side to the other, so that they can cease demonizing each other. We pray that Your Holy Spirit would be released into our country and sweep across the land, convicting us of our sin and bringing us to repentance and faith in you and in Your Son, ushering in a new era of peace in America. We pray these things in Jesus name, amen.*

## **Other Verses to Consider**

*“Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.”*

*Matthew 18:21-22*

*“For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.’ And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you.’ But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. Then summoning him, his lord \*said to him, ‘You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?’ And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.”*

*Matthew 18:23-35*

*Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity. He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need. Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.*

*Ephesians 4:25-32*

*“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.”*

*Colossians 3:12-13*

*“Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions.”*

*Mark 11:25*

*“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.”*

*Luke 6:37*