

Famous Last Words – “Father, Forgive Them”
Lk. 23:34

Introduction:

The setting of this lesson (as well as the other six lessons in this series) is at the cross of Christ. We will be noticing the seven sayings of Jesus while He was on that cruel cross. We will attempt to discuss them in order. However, we do not know the exact order, so this is not an exact chronological series. We will simply do our best to discuss these utterances as we believe they were uttered.

I. Offering forgiveness can sometimes be one of the most difficult things to do.

- A. The alternative to forgiving is holding a grudge.
 - 1. To hold a grudge is to refuse to forgive someone.
 - 2. Also, to hold a grudge is to take matters of forgiveness into our own hands.
- B. Notice some examples of those who retaliated (held a grudge) instead of forgave.
 - 1. Herodias (Mt. 14:1-12).
 - a. Herodias had John killed because she did not like what he preached.
 - b. She could not forgive John for what he preached.
 - 2. High Priests and leader of Israel (Acts 5:17-42).
 - a. They did not like the things that the apostles were doing.
 - b. They beat the apostles before releasing them.
 - 3. A Band of Jews (Acts 23:11-22).
 - a. A band of Jews gathered together and agreed that they would not eat or drink until they had killed Paul.
 - b. This attack was made known to those guarding Paul and he was not killed by them.
 - 4. In each of these examples, those who held the grudge must have been extremely difficult to live with.
- C. There are even those in the Lord’s church who would rather hold a grudge than forgive their own brethren.
 - 1. Some will look for, and use, any excuse necessary in order to keep a grudge on a brother.
 - 2. Again, just as in the examples above, these are the ones that are extremely difficult to be around.
- D. However, Jesus teaches us by this great example that we need to offer forgiveness.

II. Jesus practiced what He preached.

- A. Long before Jesus went to the cross, Jesus taught His disciples about the need and importance of forgiveness.
 1. Jesus teaches us that forgiveness is conditional.
 - a. **Mt. 6:12, 14-15** - And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. {14} For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. {15} But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.
 - b. **Lk. 6:37** - Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.
 - c. **Mk. 11:25-26** - And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. {26} But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.
 2. Jesus also taught that this forgiveness is unlimited.
 - a. **Lk. 17:3-4** - Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. {4} And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him.
 - b. **Mt. 18:21-22** - Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" {22} Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."
 - 1) After this, Jesus teaches us the parable of the Unforgiving Servant.
 3. Jesus also forgave others on several different occasions.
 - a. **Lk. 5:20** (Jesus heals and forgives a paralyzed man) - When He saw their faith, He said to him, "Man, your sins are forgiven you."
 - b. **Lk 7:47** (Jesus forgives a sinful woman while dining with Simon, a Pharisee) – Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.
- B. Even after Jesus had ascended back to the Father, His example of forgiveness was followed.
 1. Stephen forgave those who were killing him.
 2. **Acts 7:60** - Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.
- C. The example that Jesus gives us is one that teaches of the great importance of forgiveness.
 1. If we do not forgive others, we will not be forgiven!

2. There is absolutely nothing that anyone can do to us that we should not forgive.
3. If we are unwilling to forgive even the most grievous sins, we will spend an eternity in hell!
4. Even with all of the humility and shame of the cross, Jesus forgave those who put Him there.

III. God is willing to forgive us.

- A. If Christ can forgive those who put Him on the cross, God will forgive us today.
- B. There are many examples of forgiveness in the New Testament.
 1. Peter
 - a. Peter denied three times that he knew Jesus (Mt. 26:69-75).
 - b. However, after he had apparently received forgiveness, he was a great apostle of our Lord.
 2. Paul
 - a. Paul was on his way to persecute the Christians in Damascus (Acts 9:1-19).
 - b. From this point on, Paul is a great apostle and brings many people to Christ.
 - c. Notice what Paul says about forgiveness.
 - 1) I Tim. 1:12-16 - And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, {13} although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. {14} And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. {15} This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. {16} However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.
- C. Christ understands the power of forgiveness.
 1. This is why He forgave those who put Him on the cross.
 2. This is also why He will forgive us today.

Conclusion: