

* The Quiet Hour. *

The Forgiving Spirit.*

BY WAYLAND HOYT, D.D.

Then came Peter, and said to Him, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? (vs. 21, 22.) It is important that the previous verses (15-17) be carefully read. Our Lord gives the most explicit instruction as to our action when one has injured us. (1) We are not to pass it over, let it go, as though it were of slight moment; that may be the easiest way; it is not the commanded way. (2) The injured one is immediately to forth put toward the injurer; we are to go to him. (3) The injured one is to seek private and reconciling interview. (4) The injured one is to seek a second interview in the presence of one or more witnesses. (5) If this does not succeed, then, and not till then, he may tell it to his Christian brethren. (6) Only now may the injured assume a different attitude. He has earnestly sought "to gain his brother"—and that, not the pleasing of his own self-assertion, is to be the main end of his endeavor—but, having failed after such longing, loving effort, he may now, but only now, quit intercourse and cut relation. These instructions have made great impression upon Peter. He comes to Christ asking how many times he is thus to forgive—as many as seven? That seems a great many times. He wanted a specific rule limiting the obligation of forgiveness. The Rabbin limited it to three repetitions of an offence. Peter, with a glimmering idea that the rule should be enlarged, proposed seven as the limit. But Christ replies, "Until seventy times seven," that is, in effect, limitlessly; there is not, nor can be, any hard and fast rule. Christians are limitlessly to cherish and exercise this magnanimous spirit of forgiveness.

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would make a reckoning with his servants (v. 23). "Therefore"—mark that! Since the kingdom of heaven is a kingdom of divine forgiveness, "therefore" it is like this parable. Take to heart, too, that "reckoning." Sooner or later it always comes. Nobody can escape it. There is the reckoning of examinations at school. There are reckonings of stock-taking and book-balancing in business. There is the reckoning of your conscience and the reckoning with God.

And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents. And the lord of that servant being moved to compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt (vs. 24, 25, 26, 27). "Ten thousand talents" we may call, generally speaking, ten million dollars. It was a hopeless debt. The dress of this parable is borrowed from the usual custom of the time in such a case. So hopeless a debt condemns the man and his whole family to utter bondage. The man asks for time; the king grants infinitely better than the man asks. Learn (a) we are all debtors to God; our sin has made us such. (b) We are hopeless debtors; we have not "wherewith to pay." (c) Too often, like this servant, men imagine they themselves can in time pay their debt to God; they go about trying in various ways to establish their own righteousness. (d) But the only thing which can help us is a free and entire forgiveness from God; this even the most hopeless debtor may have, through Jesus Christ.

But that servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him a hundred pence: and he laid hold on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay what thou owest. (vs. 28, 29, 30.) He dared not do this in the presence of his king. It is when we go out from the conscious and cherished presence of God that evil gets the upper hand. There is no such defence from evil as the "practise of the presence of God." The "hundred pence" we may call, speaking generally, ten dollars. And such is the proportion between the injuries others may do toward ourselves and our sins towards God. But the forgiven servant would not forgive his fellow servant even the pitiable amount, comparatively, he owed him. Nor would he grant him the very prayer he himself had so passionately prayed.

So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were exceeding sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. (v. 31.) You cannot hide your unforgiving spirit. It will speak variously and harshly out. Others will certainly know and notice it.

Then his lord called unto him, and saith to him, Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou besoughtest me: shouldst not thou also have had mercy on thy fellow servant? (vs. 32, 33, 34). This is the important teaching here. Ederheim tells it, "The recall of the king's original forgiveness of the great debtor can only be intended to bring out the utter incompatibility of such harshness toward a brother, on the part of one who has been consciously forgiven by God." Dr. Arnot tells it, "If you get pardon"—forgiveness is a better word—"from God, you will give it to a brother; if you withhold it from your brother, you thereby make it manifest that you have not gotten it from God." This is the searching test—if you will not forgive as Christ directs (in vs. 15, 17), it is proof that you have never been forgiven yourself.

So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts (v. 35). Said one man to another in the hearing of John Wesley, "Take care how you offend me, for I never forgive." Spoke up John Wesley, "Then I hope you never sin; for, with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."—Christian Era World.

Explanatory Notes.

Twenty times seven (v. 21). As the margin of the Revised Version shows, the meaning may be "seventy-seven times." Of course, in any case, Jesus did not intend to give a precise number.—Commanded him to be sold (v. 25). Such a course was not uncommon, and had even been practised by the Jews at one time. Many of Christ's illustrations show how great was the distress from poverty and debts at that period.—Tormentors (v. 34). Those that by means of torture attempted to make debtors tell of property that they had concealed.—Till he should pay (v. 34). This, of course, he would never be able to do.

Lesson for August 12. Matt. 18: 21-35. GOLDEN TEXT: Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.—Matt. 6:12.

There is no sinner before whose door Christ does not stand and knock.

Sin is a tyrant, and its servants are slaves. There is no escape from the dominion of sin but by the participation in the grace of the gospel.

Dimensions of the Immeasurable.

I A Large Prayer; Eph. 3, 14-21.

BY ANNE ROSS.

A few years' ago, while walking home one morning from the early mailing of a letter, these words, "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ," presented themselves to my thoughts. Many cares were pressing at the time, and the words looked inviting.

Four words of dimension! They are not random expressions. They are placed there wittingly to tempt us out to measure the immeasurable.

I had never got on this track before, and with a good deal of interest, I called up the first word, to see what it would yield.

The breadth of the love of Christ! How broad is it! Peculiar interests in London, Detroit and Toronto, quickly led to a literal geographical answer. It is broad enough to take in London, and my own very important cares centred there. It reaches, too, across the border. It is broad enough to take in Detroit. Then Toronto is planted in the very heart of it, for the love of Christ stretches unknown distances on every side. Take I the white wings of steam, and float to the uttermost corner of the heathen world," even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me," and the love of Christ compass me round and round. The breadth of the love of Christ! It is sufficient. The whole 139th Psalm is wrapped up in that one word.

But there is length as well as breadth. My mind was fairly aroused now. How long is the love of Christ. The geographical idea will not do this time, for breadth exhausts that. Length must mean duration. How long will that love last? Let me go step by step and take in the detailed comfort of the inevitable answer.

The love of Christ will not run short before to-morrow night. Consequently, any fretting concerning the cares of to-morrow, to one who believes in the love of Christ, is entirely out of place.

That love will run on throughout the whole month of September. Consequently, anxiety concerning the peculiar duties of September would be a vote of want of confidence in the love of Christ and its providings.

October will not outrun the length of the love of my Redeemer, and the ghosts imagination may see among its days may be calmly left to Him.

Next day, times of trial or bereavement, the day of the actual crossing of Jordan, the love that died for us and that lives for us, runs on with and through all these. Rejoicing in the length of this inexpressible love, I may walk through this valley of the shadow of death fearing "no evil for Thou art with me."

Then stepped up another word—the depth of the love of Christ. How deep is it?

Richly and meltingly the answer came: It is as deep as my sinfulness, and that is deeper than I know. Down below its blackest depths that love has penetrated, and as far as it goes it cancels.

But I have other depths besides sin. That love is as deep as my ignorance, as deep as my fears, as deep as my deepest sorrow, or loneliness, or pain, or helplessness. In short it is as deep as as my deepest needs, whatever they may be. May I indeed be enabled to comprehend the depth of the love of Christ, and my soul shall sing all the day long of its fathomless fullness.

Thus far I had followed, but these words with deep delight and surprise. There was