Snake’s Teeth: A Lesson On Forgiveness

Prepared by Nathan L Morrison for Sunday September 23rd, 2018

Text: Mt. 18:21-35

### Intro

1. God’s creation is wonderful and majestic and leaves man without excuse to know God (Rom. 1:20).
2. Creation is filled with wondrous creatures and phenomenon that can teach us lessons!
3. One such lesson is found in examining a fun fact about snake’s teeth! *(See “Sources”)*
   1. The snake has a very unusual set of teeth. The only time a snake needs its teeth is to hold its prey in its mouth so the victim cannot get away.
   2. Its main way of eating is to swallow, so it needs to have its food stay in its mouth. That’s why a snake’s teeth slant backward down its throat.
   3. Once its food is caught and tries to struggle, the snake sinks its teeth in and the animal can’t move forward to get out of the grip of the snake’s teeth. A snake’s teeth are very fragile and break easily.
   4. Sometimes when the snake is eating a larger animal, its teeth will break. The amazing thing about the teeth of a snake is that the snake always has an extra full set of teeth as a spare!
   5. These teeth grow in a fold of the snake’s mouth lining, where they stay tucked away until the snake needs a new one. When the snake loses a tooth, the extra tooth behind it moves down into the empty spot.
   6. Soon, the new tooth has grown into the snake’s jawbone and is very solid, just like the one it lost was.
4. We all like to know we can start over, to have a 2nd chance.
   1. When a snake needs new teeth, they appear.
   2. When we need forgiveness & salvation, God generously provided the means in His Son.
   3. Eph. 1:7 (NLT): “He is so rich in kindness and grace that He purchased our freedom with the blood of His Son and forgave our sins.”
   4. We need to seek and to grant forgiveness as needed!
5. Snake’s teeth provide a valuable lesson in forgiveness and forgiving as Christ forgave!

#### Forgiving as Christ Forgave

* 1. Jesus told His disciples to love one another as He loved them – Jn. 13:34-35
  2. Jesus also said His disciples are to forgive as He has forgiven – Mt. 6:14; Col. 3:12-13
  3. Forgiveness is perhaps one of the hardest commands placed on Christians.
     1. We get our feelings hurt
     2. We feel wronged
     3. We want justice
     4. We want revenge
     5. We hold grudges
     6. We hold past grievances over someone’s head
  4. Jesus made it clear our forgiveness should cause us to forgive others!
     1. Mt. 18:21-35: Parable taught in response to Peter’s question as to how often one is required to forgive another.
     2. Jesus said we are to forgive as often as asked, and we cannot be forgiven if we don’t forgive! *(Given a 2nd chance, so must give others a 2nd chance!)*
  5. Not all commands from God are difficult, but some are, & require obedience nonetheless:
  6. Loving our enemies – Mt. 5:43-45
     1. We are told to love our wives, husbands, brothers, etc. They are easy to love!
     2. But love our enemies? Difficult! – Difficult for Jonah to grasp too *(Jonah 4).*
     3. Love acts in best interest of those involved – are to pray for their souls!
  7. Forgiving those who have hurt us – Mt. 6:14-15
     1. The greater the sin against us the harder it is to forgive.
     2. We are to forgive one another no matter the extent of our pain.
     3. When we instead hold grudges and become bitter we fail the test of our faith!
  8. Lk. 6:35-36: We are to be merciful as God is merciful! *(Heb. 8:12)*
  9. We must be willing to forgive to be forgiven!

#### Seek Forgiveness

* 1. Does God forgive the unrepentant heart? (Rom. 2:5-10; *see also Luke 13:3, 5)*
     1. God forgives the sinner when they repent and obey the gospel – *Acts 2:38*
     2. God forgives the Christian that sins when they repent and ask God – *I Jn. 1:9*
  2. The duty of the “offender” is to seek forgiveness – Mt. 18:26
     1. The man in parable could never repay his debt.
     2. He threw himself at the mercy of the King. The King forgave him – Mt. 18:27
     3. *As the snake grows teeth when needed, let us seek forgiveness when needed!*
  3. Service to God can be impeded by our feelings towards our brothers – Mt. 5:21-24
  4. Seek forgiveness from God and from one another! *(Acts 17:30-31: All men are to repent)*
     1. Have to get over pride to ask God for forgiveness – I Jn. 1:9
     2. Have to get over pride to ask one another for forgiveness – Mt. 5:24
  5. The one who offends (causes hurt or grief) another is to ask for forgiveness!

#### Grant Forgiveness

* 1. The offended are to be ready to forgive – Mt. 18:28-30
     1. Jesus was teaching we are all fellow debtors, have been forgiven a debt we can’t repay, so should forgive one another’s debts. (Col. 3:12-13)
     2. Mt. 18:32-35: We must forgive to be forgiven!
     3. Heb. 12:15: Can’t hold on to grudges or past slights! The root (cause) of bitterness will spring up and cause trouble!
     4. *As a snake can break its teeth holding prey in, we can break our hearts and relationships holding in past hurts – Let it go and grant forgiveness as needed– something new will grow in its place!*
  2. A heart of compassion will be ready to let go and forgive:
     1. Col. 3:12-13: We are to forgive as Christ forgave!
     2. Lk. 23:34: Jesus was willing to forgive those who put Him to death.
     3. Acts 7:60: Stephen was willing to forgive those who put him to death (they did not ask for it)! – They still needed to obey the gospel (II Thess. 1:8)
     4. Eph. 4:26-27: We can’t let anger (even if just cause) consume us.
     5. ***Though we forgive, the person still needs to seek God’s forgiveness!***
  3. We are to forgive as we have been forgiven!

## Conclusion

1. To hold grudges, bitterness, and anger is not Christ-like *(I Cor. 11:1; Heb. 8:12).*
2. There will be times people hurt us and never ask for our forgiveness:
   1. Sometimes because of their own pride
   2. They may not have realized their offense
   3. Time moves them away from us
3. Our duty as the “offended” is to let it go (Eph. 4:31) and forgive (Mk. 11:25-26).
4. *As a snake replaces teeth as it needs it, so let us seek & grant forgiveness when needed!*
   1. The illustration is that like a snake has a second set of teeth, we have been given a second chance in Christ (Eph. 1:7)!
   2. As we recognize our second chance through Christ, let us grant others a second chance (Heb. 8:12: We are to forgive like God)!
5. We ought to seek forgiveness for our sins and grant forgiveness to others as Christ forgave us!
6. If you are not a Christian, you need to be. Repent and be baptized into His name!
7. If a Christian in error, don’t wait till it’s eternally too late. Repent and be renewed!

**Sources:**

* <http://www.peteducation.com/article.cfm?c=17+1831&aid=2974>
* <https://books.google.com/books?id=s3zCkSd_MPYC&pg=PA21&lpg=PA21&dq=snake%27s+extra+set+of+teeth&source=bl&ots=BDArxy95nt&sig=eyhNwXbIcsuYGlMXsCzZeUO1S1E&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0CCwQ6AEwBWoVChMIps6En_j3yAIVUSmICh09nAjw#v=onepage&q=snake's%20extra%20set%20of%20teeth&f=false>
* *The Great Big Book of Astounding Facts: A Compendium of Everything You Never Knew You Needed to Know* by Bruce Witherspoon, Bristol Park Books, 1993