

Forgiveness

by Alan Redpath

Alan Redpath's sermon on forgiveness emphasizes its vital role in Christian life and the necessity of embodying God's love and mercy towards others.

Duration: 34:52

Scripture: Matthew 5:1-12, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 18:15-17, John 15:5, Romans 8:9, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 5:18

Topics: "Forgiveness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having a submissive and simple heart. He warns against causing others to sin and highlights the severe consequences for those who do so. The speaker then discusses the need for forgiveness, referencing Matthew 18:15-20. He acknowledges that forgiveness may not be popular, but emphasizes its significance in the Christian faith.

Transcript

Good evening, everyone. That's better. Thank you.

I suppose all these lights aren't really necessary. I'd be very thankful if half of them were shut off. So would you, apparently.

I can stand anything but humidity. I think I told you today, in Chicago, one Labor Day, I was out walking in a park there. Boy, it was a hundred degrees.

And there was a dog chasing a cat, and they were both walking. That's how I feel. Now, I want you to sing with me a chorus.

We've had some lovely music here. I sit there at the back and listen, it's just thrilling. It's a great blessing.

I would like to take that group over to Britain with me, and just put them in some of our churches there that need to come alive, and there will be a tremendous help. Now, the chorus I want you to learn tonight is the second one. Jesus Christ is alive today.

I know, I know it's true. Sovereign of the universe, I pay him homage due. Seated there at God's right hand, I am living in the promised land.

Jesus lives and reigns in me, that's how I know it's true. Could we just hear the tune from him? Right. He's alive today.

I know, I know it's true. I pay him homage due. Seated there at God's right hand, I am living in the promised land.

Jesus lives and reigns in me, that's how I know it's true. Everybody. Jesus is alive today, I know.

You know I told you, you can't sing until you cough. Clear your throat, that's better. Take a deep breath, swallow, and don't sing from the back of your throat, but from your diaphragm.

Everybody now, once again. Jesus Christ is alive today. I know, I know it's true.

Seated there at God's right hand, I am living in the promised land. Jesus lives and reigns in me, that's how I know it's true. Everybody.

Jesus is alive today. I know, I know it's true. Seated there at God's right hand, I am living in the promised land.

Jesus is alive today. I know, I know it's true. Everybody.

Jesus is alive today. I know, I know it's true. Seated there at God's right hand, I am living in the promised land.

Jesus is alive today. I know, I know it's true. Seated there at God's right hand, I am living in the promised land.

Jesus is alive today. I know, I know it's true. Seated there at God's right hand, I am living in the promised land.

Jesus is alive today. I know, I know it's true. Seated there at God's right hand, I am living in the promised land without anybody clapping.

I mean, while you sing it. Please don't shoot me down in flames for suggesting you do. But just loosen up and praise the Lord.

Come on. Jesus Christ is alive today. I know it's true.

Sovereign of the universe, I give Him homage to. Seated there at God's right hand, I am with Him in the promised land. Jesus lives.

I'll ask you to sing it once again last time and stand up and praise the Lord together. Everybody. People said, Amen.

Please be seated. Now, down to business. Open your Bibles with me at Matthew chapter 18.

And I'll ask Tim to play the tune of the first chorus on the sheet. Thank you, God, for sending Jesus. Thank you, Jesus, that you care.

Holy Spirit, won't you teach me more about His lovely hand. Let's sing this chorus first and then we'll read God's word. Thank you, God, for sending Jesus.

Anybody not heard it before? Not many of you. All right. You learned it yesterday, perhaps.

Everybody together. Thank you, God, for sending Jesus. Thank you, Jesus, that you care.

Holy Spirit, won't you teach me His love. Matthew chapter 18 and done. We'll read from verse 15 to the end of the chapter.

And then we'll quietly sing the chorus again in an attitude of prayer and worship. I said to you yesterday, I love this chorus. It's a favorite of mine.

Because it always reminds me that I am shut up to a miracle for anything worthwhile. Holy Spirit, won't you teach me more about His lovely hand. Only the Holy Spirit can do that.

I can't, but He can. So we're dependent upon Him. Matthew 18 and verse 15.

This is the Lord Jesus speaking. If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. And whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.

For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them. Then Peter came up and said to him, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him, as many as seven times? Jesus said to him, I do not say to you seventy times seven times, but seventy times seven. Therefore, the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.

When he began the reckoning, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.

And out of pity for him, the lord of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But that same servant, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. And seizing him by the throat, he said, Pay what you owe.

So his fellow servant fell down and besought him, Have patience with me, and I will pay you. He refused, and went and put him in prison till he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place.

Then his lord summoned him and said to him, You wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt because you besought me, and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you? And in anger his lord delivered him to the jailers till he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart. This is the word of the lord.

Bow together in prayer, shall we? Then would you just pray to us, give us the note, and we'll sing unaccompanied, Thank you God for sending Jesus. Thank you God for sending Jesus. Thank you Jesus that you came.

Holy Spirit, won't you teach more about his love? Now just let me leave you with God quietly for about half a minute. Perhaps some of you had a busy day. Some of you come here rushed and many other things on your mind.

Ask the lord that you may settle down in his presence, that Jesus may stand among us in his risen power, and make this time of worship a hallowed hour. Let's pray quietly together. Dear lord, we believe that not one of us is here by accident, or even by our own choice, behind the fact of our presence right now, there has been the constraint of your Holy Spirit, creating a desire in our hearts to seek you, to wait upon you, and to say to you, Lord, speak to me.

Lord, you never disappoint us. You're waiting to do far more for us than we could ever ask or think. So we will just expose our heart to you tonight.

Cleanse me from my sin, Lord. Put thy power within, Lord. Take me as I am, Lord, and make me all thine own.

Keep me day by day, Lord, underneath thy sway, Lord. Make my heart thy palace and thy royal throne. Do that for each one of us tonight.

For your name and for your glory's sake. Amen. We are taking a series during these few nights on the subject of learning to live.

There's nothing profound about them. There's nothing deep theologically about them. I trust that there's something very practical about them.

I trust that they reach my heart, to yours, because they originate in the heart and mind of our God, who I'm sure has a great purpose for every one of his children here this evening. Yesterday, we studied together a lesson on faith in Matthew chapter 15. Tonight, a lesson on forgiveness in this, the 18th chapter.

Tomorrow, God willing, a lesson on love. And Wednesday, a lesson on powerlessness, learning to live. And we begin tonight, then, our lesson on forgiveness.

I really have had a difficult time today in preparing this message, because it's the sort of ministry that certainly won't be popular, but then I've reached the age when that doesn't matter. I'm not candidating for any pulpit. But I have reached the age when I'm determined to be honest in proclaiming God's word and let the chips fall where they may.

And I wondered why this particular theme was to be on my heart tonight. I think partly because just before my wife and I left England to come over here, a church, which means a great lot to me in the old country, where I have many friends, and which has been a great tower of strength, that church in Britain, has been split from top to bottom. And love has gone out the door.

It's still sound, of course, but there's no love. Two camps of people divided, one against the other, won't speak to each other, in fact. And I think how it all began, just one or two at the top of the church had a disagreement.

Everybody began to form camps, to take sides, and the whole church was divided into factions. And it still is. The pastor has left.

Three cheers in hell. Satan has had a wonderful victory. I trust yet he'll be mightily defeated.

But how easily that kind of thing can happen. And I was thinking about it, very burdened, and I came to this message and thought to myself, now, Lord, how can this be relevant to a situation like this, where there's such a wonderful crowd of eager, hungry folks, listening for God's word. Well, only he knows about us, and the depth of our need.

I want to assure you that anything I say tonight has nothing at all to do with any conversations I may have had with your pastor or with anybody else. I haven't asked them about anything in their church. I just don't know.

But if what I say has real relevance, that's the Lord's doing. And because he has something to say to us on this theme of forgiveness tonight. Let us just look at this chapter a moment.

And you see that in the opening part of it, the disciples were asking Jesus about greatness in the kingdom of heaven. And the Lord had spoken to them about the heart of a little child as a condition of entering the kingdom. A heart that would be submissive and simple.

And then he went on to speak in the opening five and six verses with terrible sternness to those who offend and cause others to sin. Better for such a person to have, he said, a great millstone put around his neck and he'd be flung into the sea. Therefore, said Jesus, if you find yourself causing other people to stumble, pluck out your eye.

Pluck out your hand. Better to enter life maimed than be cast into hell. And he made it terrifically clear that the kingdom of heaven is not a permissive society.

There's no room in it, no place in it for loose living, for slack morals. Wherever his children go on earth, they take the kingdom life with them. And if you want to know what that kind of life is, just turn back a moment to Matthew chapter five.

And here it is. Here is the Lord's self-portrait, what is called the Beatitudes, with which the Sermon on the Mount commences. Of course, you know, don't you, that the Sermon on the Mount was not preached to a crowd.

It was preached to disciples. It's the kind of life that God expects his people to live when they're in the kingdom. The kind of life that's natural to the Holy Spirit when he has sway with his people, impossible to us.

I don't find the Christian life difficult. I find it impossible, apart from Holy Spirit power. But this is kingdom living.

And I'm only going to make a sentence comment about each of them to startle you into the reality of it. He opened his mouth and taught them, the disciples, saying, happy or blessed are the poor in spirit. Better be humble than self-competent.

Happy, how extraordinary, happy are those who mourn. Better be sensitive than thick-skinned. Happy are the meek.

Better be gentle than push yourself. Happy are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. Better be ambitious for goodness than for promotion.

Happy are the merciful. Better be kind to the needy than cultivate the rich. Happy are the pure in heart.

Better be open and honest than to pull strings to get things done the way you want them. Happy are the peacemakers. Better to calm things down than to stand up for your own point of view.

Happy are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Happy are you when men revile you, persecute you, and utter all kinds of evil against you, falsely on my account. Better be an underdog than fight the system.

Kingdom living. A lifestyle utterly contrary to the lifestyle of society today. A lifestyle expected by God of his redeemed family.

Redeemed by the blood of Jesus. Indwelt by the Holy Spirit. But what are we to do about those who fail? And those who sin? Are we to cut them off and leave them? Is there no forgiveness? And here is the second great lesson of this chapter.

The first lesson was greatness. The second, forgiveness. And the two are intimately connected, for the mark of real greatness is your ability to forgive.

Get that? Your mark or the mark of real greatness in a Christian is the ability to forgive. That, of course, was supremely true and is supremely true of God himself. It must also be true of every member of his family.

The most anonymous of us. What amazing teaching there is here. How it searches and how it comforts.

The Lord who makes us just tremble at the sheer thought of offending someone else is the same Lord who expects us to show compassion and love to those who do sin and go after them to seek to recover them. There is no exhausting the love of God. No limit to its outreach.

No end to its patience. No limit to the offense that it can bear and yet go on loving. No end to its trust.

No limit to its endurance. No fading of its hope. The love of God can outlast anything.

Somehow, that has got to become the distinctive mark of all his family. The Lord have mercy on us. It seems to me that usually it's easier to forgive someone who's a comparative stranger than it is to forgive a member of your own family.

Now, what does the Lord say about that? First, he gives some instructions. Verse 15 through verse 20. This is that provoke Peter's question in verse 21 and which lead to our Lord's parable that he gives here.

I'll come to that shortly. If thy brother, if your brother sins, verse 15, the words against you don't appear in some of the manuscripts. At our responsibility, I speak slowly, deliberately, carefully, that I might discharge this burden on my heart faithfully and you may understand.

Our responsibility to our brother who sins is not created because he hurts us, but because he's hurt himself. How important it is to be sure of the motive in speaking to someone else about their faults. Is it because he's hurt me and my pride is injured or is it because he has hurt himself and my love for him is

taking action? In any event, my concern is to gain my brother.

I might say my sister, either. I'm using the word in a generic sense. My concern is to gain my brother, verse 15, and to recover his usefulness and, of course, it says, you'll notice, if your brother sins, in other words, he's wrong, you're right.

That's the usual way around, of course. The other person's wrong, I'm right. All right.

I must begin by going and showing him his fault between himself and myself. That's not permission from Christ. It's instruction.

Please get that. It's mere weakness or a false sort of piety that prevents me going to a brother in Christ or a sister and pointing out his or her fault in order to restore him. It's our business to show him his fault and if he admits it and in the depths of his soul acknowledges it, then the purpose of my ministry has been fulfilled.

And out of that confession and repentance will come a new fellowship with the Lord. But supposing he won't hear? Well, responsibility is still mine. Verse 16.

We are then to take one or two others and go to them again on the same business to bring him back to fellowship. But supposing he still won't hear and gets mad with me and is still rebellious? Verse 17. We are to tell it to the church and in so doing, either the man who offends will be restored or has to be treated as a publican and put out of fellowship.

Now, please notice very carefully the responsibility that Jesus places on his church. The authority he gives it. Read verses 18 through 20.

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