

Are You Angered By The Forgiveness of God

by Carter Conlon

This sermon emphasizes the importance of forgiveness, highlighting the need to release grievances and embrace the forgiveness of God. It delves into the story of Jonah and the struggle with anger towards God's forgiveness, urging listeners to be ambassadors of forgiveness in a world filled with bitterness and division. The message underscores the power of forgiveness in healing relationships, physical ailments, and spiritual bondage, urging a heart of forgiveness as essential for the days ahead.

Scripture: Matthew 18:21, Luke 23:34, Ephesians 4:31, Colossians 3:13, 1 John 1:9, Hebrews 12:15, James 5:16, Psalm 103:12, Proverbs 19:11

Topics: "Forgiveness", "Healing Relationships"

Description

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Transcript

Praise God. Tonight, I'd like to take a few moments before we go to the communion table and we will be going to communion tonight. So if you're at home and you'd like to partake with us of the bread and the juice that represents the body and the shed blood of Jesus Christ, then we encourage you to go to your kitchen and get some bread or crackers and some juice of any kind and partake with us tonight.

Even the necessity of it is even greater now, I think, as we see our world unfolding before us than it's ever been before. Pastor Tim DeLena, my pastor, spoke a message on Sunday morning entitled At Times, The Times When God Makes You Really, Really Angry. And the Lord always seems to give me a spinoff of what he's speaking so that I can speak it in this prayer meeting on Tuesday night.

And subsequently, it goes out on the radio across the country a little later on on the next week or two. And I have a question that came to my heart as I was listening to Pastor Tim on Sunday morning. And the question is, are you angered by the forgiveness of God? Does his forgiveness anger you? Now, there's some people listening to you and say, well, pastor, absolutely not.

I ask him for forgiveness every day. Well, there's a little bit of a trick to this question because it's really not about you. It's about God's willingness to forgive.

There's hardly a scene more beautiful in the entire Bible, really, than Jesus Christ on the cross, beaten, bruised, betrayed, lied about, slandered, mocked, and everything else you can think of with the sin of the world upon his shoulders, our failings and faults upon him, and out of his mouth, when he had all the power to judge the power, to condemn the power, to actually send us into a darkened eternity, the thing that comes out of his mouth is, Father, forgive them. They know not what they do. And if that is not a beautiful statement from the heart of God, and realistically, that is the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is about forgiveness. It's about God sending his son to a cross to suffer these things, to pay the price for the wrong things that we have done, which the Bible calls sin, things that we've done against what God says in his word, we are to be, and how we're to live, and how we're to think, what our lives are to look like. And he sent his son when we stood against those things, and the Bible calls that sin, to pay the penalty that needed to be paid so we could be returned back into a living relationship with God himself.

And what a beautiful thing to think of the fact that God's kingdom is a kingdom of forgiveness. And we are now not only forgiven, but we are called to be ambassadors of that forgiveness. We're ambassadors of this kingdom.

Whether, I don't know how you view yourself tonight, but realistically, you are an ambassador. God's kingdom is an eternal kingdom. All the kingdoms of this world will one day pass away, but God's kingdom is not going to pass away.

And he's already declared you an ambassador. Just in the United States of America, for example, we have maybe one ambassador to one country. That's just the way our system works.

But in heaven, God decrees that all of us are ambassadors now of his kingdom, which is an eternal kingdom that does not fade away. And it's a kingdom built on the cornerstone of the forgiveness of God. So as ambassadors, we are called to represent that kingdom, the way we live, the way we move, as Paul says, how we have our being, our thought process, the way we conduct our lives.

We are ambassadors of this wonderful kingdom that God established when he chose to forgive us through his son, Jesus Christ. But sometimes we can get angered at the forgiveness of God. Now, let me explain this to you.

We're gonna start in Matthew chapter 18, and we're gonna finish in the book of Jonah chapter four. You might wanna take a look and find those while I pray so that we can all be in the word of God together. So Father, thank you, Lord, tonight, that we are a people who are called to be a people with a new value system.

Your promise to us is that we're given a new heart, a new mind, and a new spirit. The old things are passed away, and behold, you say, all things are become new. But sometimes, Lord, the old things want to linger on in our lives.

The old things want to take preeminence over the new things. The old things want to make dirty a clean testimony that you've given to us. The old things want to obscure your kingdom, your cross, by allowing us, in a sense, not to represent you the way that we should.

So God, tonight, let your word be engraved on our hearts. That was your promise, Lord, that it would not be just something we hear and just walk away and consider and say, well, that's nice, but it would be something that would be literally engraved in our character, that we would embrace your word, that we would walk in your word, that we would be people of the word of God. Help us, especially now, when there's such unforgiveness, literally, like a river flowing through this world.

God, we thank you for it, in Jesus' name. Matthew chapter 18, verse 21. Then Peter came to him and said, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times.

I honestly think that Peter expected a commendation at this point. I expected, Peter thought that Jesus would look at him and said, thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church. Now, that was going to come at a point in the future, but at this point, Peter thought, wow, like, you know, he was a fisherman, and he was probably a very rugged man, too, as well, and you might get away with something once, but, and maybe twice, but never the third time.

So I think he estimated his own spirituality and stretched it out to seven and expected a commendation. But Jesus said to him, I did not say to you up to seven times, but up to 70 times seven. Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.

Now, keep in mind, Jesus is still answering the question, how many times shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? And when he had begun, verse 24, to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him 10,000 talents, and that's a huge amount of money in our currency of today. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, and his wife, and his children, and all that he had, and that payment be made, and I don't know about you, but I just think in my own life, and the debt that I owed to God that I couldn't repay, the things that had gotten ahold of my life and my heart, the impossibility of making it right, and it would be something that if it were not dealt with and paid for, it would bring affliction into my wife's life, and into my children's lives, and into my grandchildren's lives. But just as this servant did, I did in 1978, it says, the servant fell down before him, saying, master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.

Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. And I thank God to this day with all my heart of the day in 1978 that I pulled over on the side of the road, and I prayed a simple prayer. Lord Jesus, if this is true, what my friend has told me.

Another police officer told me about this freedom and salvation I could have in Christ. If it's true, then I open my heart to you to be my Lord and my Savior. And that day, Christ received me.

That day, he forgave my debt. That day, the curse, which would have come on my home, and not only would I be sold as a slave to sin, but it would affect my wife and my children, and all that I had. And so God forgave me this incredible debt that I owed.

Then the master of that servant, verse 27, was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him 100 denarii. Now, in other words, what this other man owed him in comparison to what he owed God, may I put it this way, was so insignificant, it was almost not even worth considering.

The debt that anybody owes me is so small compared to what I owed God. That's the contrast that's being made here. And he laid hands on him and took him by the throat and saying, pay me what you owe me.

In other words, so we see an anger in this man. And this is the problem, I think, that all of us face from time to time. We're betrayed, as Jesus was on the cross.

We're lied about, we're abused and bruised and taken for granted, all kinds of things. Somebody borrows money, doesn't pay it back. There can be all kinds of things happen to us.

Our human tendency is to reach out and take that man, even if it's not physically so, we do it in spirit. We take them by the throat and we exact payment. Say, I will not release you of the debt you owe me and what you've done to me.

Until you pay me all. And the fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him saying, have patience with me and I will pay you all. And he would not, but went and threw him into prison until he should pay the debt.

And don't we do that now? Don't we lock people out of our lives? Don't we lock them away? We put them away and say, I'll not forgive you. And you can't come anywhere near me. My door is locked to you and you don't exist anymore.

And we go out of our way to share the story with others because that's the proof that we still have that person by the throat. And keep in mind, I opened by saying tonight, we are ambassadors of a kingdom of forgiveness. Some ambassador we are, when this kind of a spirit gets ahold of us and it does get ahold of us from time to time.

It's only by the spirit of Christ within us, the spirit of God, the Holy Spirit inside of our lives, that we have the power now to subdue this other nature. They will always want to rise and always want to take the preeminence in our dealings with other people. Verse 31 says, so when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved and came and told their master all that had been done.

Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, you wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you? And his master was angry and delivered him to the torturers. In the King James original, it says to the tormentors, to torment and delivered him to torment until he should pay all that was due to him.

So my heavenly father will also do to you, if each of you from his heart does not forgive his brother, his trespasses. I often wonder, how do we get beyond that? How do we, as God's people, put that away and think that somehow it's not going to affect us? You see, there are choices that we have to make when it comes to forgiveness. We have so many people today battling in the kingdom of God to forgive.

Now, we are to be of the opposite spirit to the people of this world in our time who don't want to forgive. They want to hurt, they want to vilify, they want to marginalize, they want vengeance. And we know they'll never be happy, nobody will.

Only God can bring that healing into the heart that can enable us to forgive one another. Let me give you some examples of people tonight who have just texted in throughout the week, needing the power to forgive. Here's from Pennsylvania, the healing of my hurting heart and forgiveness of those who have hurt my heart and justified it.

From New Jersey, prayer for reconciliation for my two daughters who fought in July, 2018 and never reconciled. Please, God, cause them to reunite and to forgive one another. So this is obviously from a

Christian home, a Christian environment.

From the U.S., prayer for my niece who continues not wanting to forgive her mother. It's affected her relationship with her family. Remember, he said all the family are to be sold off and everybody's gonna suffer because of this debt that is owed and not forgiven.

From another city here in the States, please pray for my husband not to be so rude to my family, that he would be forgiving and merciful and that he would surrender to Jesus. I'm asking you to pray for Kajilah that God would take the anger, the bitterness and unforgiveness out of her heart by the root. From Australia, pray for me.

Someone I know has turned against me and I find it very hard. It's a cell group and I need to forgive them. Please pray for God to please help me.

From Plainview, please pray against discord between two sons and their wives. They know Jesus. Pray for forgiveness between them and unity.

Our hearts are broken over this. From San Antonio, Texas, pray for forgiveness for the lack of love. I need to lay unforgiveness down and to be more like Jesus, who is the truth.

And from New York, pray for the Manasseh and his family. I'm trying to move on, but I'm filled with offense. He and his dad offended me, but I'm also for God's will and intervention.

So I'm filled with offense, but I'm also for God's will and his intervention. So my question to you tonight, anonymous here in New York, are you angered by the forgiveness of God? Now, let me explain this. In the book of Jonah in the Old Testament, there was a man who was sent by God for a specific reason, a specific ministry that God had given to him.

He ran from that ministry. Now, I want you to consider tonight, maybe forgiveness is your ministry at this present point. You see, because you can't be an ambassador of forgiveness until you forgive.

So maybe, just maybe, God is asking you tonight to forgive somebody that has wounded you, that has hurt you, that has brought difficulty into your life. Maybe, just maybe, some of the physical afflictions that people are suffering, some of the mental torment that they're going through, some of the addictions, and all of the things that people are praying for online or submitting prayer requests for, have you ever thought that they might be just linked to unforgiveness? You can go online and research it yourself. Doctors will tell you, psychiatrists will tell you that there are all kinds of afflictions released not only into the human mind, but into the human body because of bitterness and unforgiveness.

The Bible in the book of Hebrews calls unforgiveness a root sin that goes down deep into the character in the body of the person and defiles the whole body. There are secretions that are released in the body that cause disease because of bitterness and unforgiveness. I remember years ago, I was transferred into an office in the police department.

There was a gentleman, another officer on the desk. He was only 32 years old and he had a terminal illness and he was put there really to answer the phone until he became incapacitated. At a certain point, he asked me about what I believed.

I was able to share Christ with him and in the office, I led him to Jesus Christ. He received Christ as his savior and about a week or two later, he went to the doctor and the doctor, he just went for his weekly checkup because his illness was terminal and the doctor said, I don't know how to explain this to you. He said, but you're completely healed.

There is no longer any disease in your body. He says, I have no explanation for it. This was not a recent diagnosis.

This thing had gone on in his life for quite some time. He said, you have no more disease in your body. I remember he came and he told me, he says, I'm healed, I'm healed and listen, I never prayed for him.

We never even talked about healing. I led him to Christ. I said, how do you think the healing happened in your body? Here's what he told me.

When I was a boy, my father was a cruel man and he would stand me in the bathtub of ice cold water and beat me with his belt until there were welts all over my body. He said, I hated that man and I lived to see him die in pain. When Jesus came into my life, he said, I forgave my father and with the forgiveness, with the bitterness, out went the disease.

That was his testimony to me. He'd never taken a course on this. He never read a book on it.

He said to me, with the forgiveness of my father, with the bitterness, when the bitterness left my life, the disease went with it. Isn't that amazing? I'm not suggesting that's gonna happen in every case, but it does happen in some cases. There are people tonight that your prayer request has helped me to get over alcoholism or cigarettes or I'm fighting in my home and my marriage or there are so many of them.

Have you ever thought it might all go back to somebody that you just refuse to forgive and because of it, the tormentors have access to you? Jesus said, this is what my heavenly father will do if after being forgiven, you refuse to forgive. So look at this man Jonah now, just for a couple of minutes. He himself, he abdicated his ministry and he ended up going in the opposite direction and going in the opposite direction, he found himself in a, I shared a couple of weeks ago in a whale of a storm and it was an impossible situation.

And in his situation, the scripture says in Jonah chapter two, verses two, he said, I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction and he answered me out of the belly of Sheol, the place of the dead, I cried and you heard my voice. So he cried in his distress and he cried out in his rebellion to God and his indifference and everything else he had done and God heard him and God forgave him and God restored him and God sent him to do the thing that he was called to do. And he went into the city called Nineveh and he preached judgment, no mercy in it, he just preached judgment, 40 days and it's all over.

How many of us would like to do that to somebody who has harmed us? There's something in the human heart that we'd like to call that brother, that sister and said, God's given me a word for you, 40 days and you're gonna burn, it's all over. 40 days and your heart's gonna stop beating, get your house in order. Is this something in us that wants to do that? This is kind of the beginning of what God called him to do because God had something in mind and Jonah wasn't at this point really a partaker of the heart of God.

As a matter of fact, he was angered, he was about to be angered by what God was going to do. So what happened is he preached that message all through this particular city, the city of Assyrians, the city of people who had a history of violence against his own people, this city of gross betrayal and immorality and

conquest and all kinds of evil, this thing that he would find loathsome inside. You know, I know there's people listening tonight that somebody did something to you that you find loathsome.

Maybe it happened to you when you were a child. There's things that never should have happened to somebody from people maybe that you trusted in your life and it's a loathsome thing. And in obedience to God, more or less, maybe you've gone even to some of these people and said, you know, the wages of sin is death.

You kind of whispered the second half of that, but the gift of God is eternal life. And you went anyway because you felt obligated to do, not ever thinking that God was going to really forgive them. And sometimes it's hard for us, it's hard to deal with the fact that God is willing to forgive people that maybe we are not.

And we will need his strength to go on the journey with him. See, Jonah needed the strength of God because there was just no way he was going to be able to make this journey and bring it to completion unless God gave him the strength. So God ends up forgiving the Ninevites.

He talks to them about judgment. They end up dressing in sackcloth and ashes. They end up turning from wrong, asking God for mercy, humbling themselves in the sight of God.

Now, Jonah goes to a mountaintop and he sits there and he waits for the city to burn and God didn't burn it. He actually forgave the people. And in chapter four, verse one, it says, it displeased Jonah exceedingly and he became angry.

That's amazing. You know, some people get angered by the forgiveness of God. Get angered when God forgives somebody that hurt you.

God forgives somebody that hurt your family. God forgives somebody that maybe hurt your people. God forgives them.

And the thought of forgiveness. I remember years ago, we had a prayer meeting on a Tuesday night and I suggested we should pray for the police department. I remember seeing people in the sanctuary in Times Square Church, about four or five, getting up and walking out.

So angered by the fact that I would even suggest that we should pray for the police department. And I remember one night I suggested that we pray for our president, Donald Trump, and the same thing happened again. And I got emails talking about, you know, all the things the news says.

He's a this and he's a that and he's a this and he's a that. And it didn't seem to matter to the people that the Bible tells us to pray for those in authority over you. We were just obeying the scriptures.

It doesn't mean that you're necessarily agree with everything a person does or what they are. We as the people of God are ambassadors of reconciliation. And we are to pray for those in authority that we might lead, as the scripture says, a peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

And so when God chose to forgive, he became angry. You see, if we're not careful, that can happen to Christian people. When God forgives people that we don't wanna forgive.

When God erases the debt and we wanna take them by the throat and say, no, you gotta pay me what you owe me. We don't want to release. We wanna be released and forgiven, but we don't want to forgive and

release.

Now something starts happening to him. His prayer now starts becoming a complaint against the ways of God. Hard to imagine that, you know, that God could actually forgive a people and he starts to complain in his prayer against the way God has dealt with his enemies.

And in verse three of chapter four, he says, therefore now, oh Lord. Now this is a prayer. Okay, please take my life from me for it is better for me to die than to live.

He is so offended that God would forgive the enemies of his people that he loses now the will to go on. And he asks the Lord, he's so mad at God. He says, take my life.

If this is the way you're gonna do things, then kill me. Kill me. If this is the way you're going to, if you're going to be kind to my enemies, then you might as well just execute your wrath on me.

Take my life. I really don't care. It's better for me right now to die than to live.

And in verse eight, you know, from that point onward, he gets some temporary comfort and shade that grows around him. And so he finds a little bit of comfort and God in his mercy tries to reason with him by removing those temporary comforts. You know, when we're not living for God, when we're not doing things God's way, he does have a way of getting ahold of us.

He does have a way of, as we often say, turning the screws. So we will start to consider his ways and turn away from ours. Remember that the sin nature of fallen humanity is to be as God is and to become a judge of what is good and what is evil.

So that's the sin nature. And that nature will come to the surface and start telling us that something evil is good and something good is evil. Only the spirit of God and the word of God can bring us back into line again.

And for God to do that, he will trouble us. You know, there's a parable. It's a story in the Old Testament where it says the cover becomes too short and the bed becomes too narrow.

He'll take away your sleep. He'll take away your comfort. He'll take away your peace.

He'll take away your rest. And again, in verse eight, he says, it's better for me to die than to live. He wants to die when God tries to reason with him by removing temporary comforts.

He's so angered at the forgiveness of God and God is still trying to reach him. And it's the second time now that he asks God really to take his life. I don't know about you, but I'm thankful that sometimes our prayers are not answered right on the spot.

Thankful that God is a God of mercy. And in spite of our folly, he still is a God who forgives. Thank God for that.

Then lastly, he is so entrenched in his own worldview that he starts declaring the ways of God to be wrong. I want you to think about this in the context of what we are experiencing in our culture today. When as the people of God, we are to be ambassadors of forgiveness, we can end up like David once did on the wrong side of the battle, standing with the Philistines, preparing to fight against the army of God.

I often wonder what was in his mind at that point. How did I get to where I am? And if you're not careful, you can end up fighting on the wrong side, fighting for the wrong kingdom, standing for what you think is just, but in the sight of God, it isn't. It's really just unforgiveness.

He holds to his own worldview and declares the ways of God to be wrong. Then God said to Jonah, is it right for you to be angry about the plant? Now he had a plant that died that was giving him shade. And he said, it is right for me to be angry even to death.

Think this through. This is a servant of God. Matter of fact, this is a prophet of God.

This is a man sent on a special mission. This is a man who was used of God to bring an entire city to its knees before a holy God. This is a man who just had an incredible spiritual victory, but three times he wants to die because he says, this is not what my plan was.

This is not what was in my heart. This is why I didn't want to go. In verse two, he says, ah, Lord, is this not what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore, I fled previously to Tarsus, for I know you're a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger, abundant in loving kindness, and one who relents from doing harm.

Didn't I tell you this is what's gonna happen? That I was gonna go to my enemies. I was gonna go to my people's enemies. I was gonna talk to them about judgment and you were gonna forgive them if they repented.

I knew this was going to happen. And so for the third time, he says, I am so angry that you forgave these people that I would rather die than live. Hard to think that somebody can get that way, but they can.

Hard to think that that kind of a spirit could get a hold of a servant of God, but it can. If we let the lower nature begin to reign in situations of crisis and betrayal and difficulty, then we become ambassadors of a much lower kingdom than the one that we are called to represent. The last two verses of chapter four, and then we'll close.

The Lord said, you've had pity on the plant for which you have not labored nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than 120,000 persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left and much livestock? The Lord says, you cared because you lost your own comfort. Should I not care for those created in my image, 120,000 people who live in spiritual ignorance, 120,000 people who have lived violent lives, 120,000 people who have conquered.

The Assyrians were known for their forced marches. They would conquer cities and put rings of iron in people's noses and chains on their hands and take them on forced marches. And many of them would die of the hardship on that march.

The devout enemies of the people of God. And the Lord says, should I not have pity? Should I not say one more time, father, forgive them. They don't know what they do.

You see, they don't know their right hand from their left hand. They have no idea. They don't know what right and wrong is.

They live in spiritual ignorance. But Jonah, you don't live in ignorance. That should not be your testimony.

You knew that I'm long suffering. You knew that I'm kind. You knew that I forgive.

Why were you so unwilling to be an ambassador of that forgiveness? Now, I speak to people who are online tonight who struggle with the issue of forgiveness. Bring it back into perspective. What you owe God is so much more than what anybody owes you.

That Jesus Christ himself said, you have no right to hold to unforgiveness when it comes to them. So in strict, just in obedience to God, forgive them. Whether it has to be a letter, a card, a phone call, or just in your heart.

Maybe the person you need to forgive has already gone on. They've already died. But you still need to forgive them.

And you just simply do it by faith. You say, Lord, I just released the debt. And then if that person is still alive, one of the ways of getting out of the trap of bitterness is start praying for them every day.

You can't hate a person you're praying for, I'll tell you right now. Oh, you might for a little while, but less and less and less every day. You just say, God, and ask the Lord to bless them.

Ask the Lord to give them a prosperous journey. Ask the Lord that one day maybe when you meet them at the throne, that you can rejoice together. Ask for the forgiveness of Christ to become their portion as well as yours.

Don't live in a place that you're not called to live in. Don't end up like Jonah on a mountain, angry and asking to die, to die, to die. Angry with God saying, your ways are not right.

You're not just, you're not the person, or you're not the God that I thought you were. And there's nothing here that says he ever changed his mind or ever changed his heart. I don't know the end of Jonah.

I just know he himself was shown great grace, but he did not want to show it to those who had hurt his family and hurt his people. Let that not be your testimony. Let it not be mine.

And tonight we're coming to the communion table. And here's my prayer for you and for me. I don't want to go to my grave with unforgiveness towards a single person in my heart.

I want my life to be clean. And I honestly want to die as an ambassador of the cross, an ambassador of grace. Now, it's not always easy.

There will always be a Judas. It will happen in your life. There will always be people who say or do unkind things.

That's part of the cup of being a Christian. But I don't want to hold a grievance. I don't want to grab a single person by the throat.

I just don't want to live there. It's simply not worth it. Come too far to end up dying a fool now.

And so I encourage you with all my heart. Maybe tonight as we pray and partake of this communion and recognize this as the ultimate forgiveness of God for our sins, maybe just maybe we can ask the Holy Spirit for the courage and the strength to release the debt that somebody else might owe us. And you'd be surprised.

Remember my friend, I talked about the other police officer. When he forgave his father, a fatal disease left his body. It just left him.

We never even talked about it. Never read a book. I didn't pray for his healing because honestly, I didn't think he was going to be healed.

I thought I was, when I went home after leading him to crisis, oh, thank God. I've led this man to you, Lord. He's going to die shortly.

And thank God I've led him to you. Not realizing God was going to heal him, fully restore him. A miracle, an absolute miracle.

Nobody could deny it because he was diagnosed a long time with this condition. So thank God for what he does. And maybe tonight as you choose to receive and to give the forgiveness of God, who knows what will leave your life.

Even a sense of self-loathing might find its way out the door, an addiction of some sort, a mental addiction, a physical addiction, a substance abuse. Maybe your marriage is a mess because you've just never forgiven somebody you need to forgive. It's that important right now.

You see, as the body of Christ, we don't have to give the tormentors access to us. We can choose to lock the door on them by giving somebody forgiveness who needs it. I've had to go through this.

Pastor Teresa's had to go through this. Pastor Tim has had to go through this. Pastor Patrick has had to do this.

Everyone I know has had to release somebody from something that they did to them. And I've known a few people along the way who didn't. I'll close with this before we go to the communion table.

I was asked one time to go see a missionary. He had been a missionary for 28 years in a foreign nation. He was famous.

He was decorated. He was honored by the president of that country for his work. And yet in his seventies, he was locked in his basement in his house.

And somebody called me and said, Pastor Carter, could you go visit him? He can't come out of the house and can't preach anymore. And I went to visit this man and I went down into his basement and I talked with him. And all he could do is rehearse an old grievance that had happened to him many, many years before he even went to the mission field, if you can imagine.

And even all those years of service on the mission field left him tormented at the end of his days because he refused to forgive. Some people who had harmed him. Oh yes.

Oh yes. There is power in the gospel to forgive. There's power to release.

And there's also a consequence when we don't. I could not reason that man out of his bitterness with all his years of preaching the gospel. I could not reason him to a place where he could forgive those who had wronged him.

He held to that like a, there's an old story of a bear who goes to a campfire and he grabs a cauldron that's been burning on the fire. And as it begins to burn his chest, his instinct is to squeeze it tighter. And so, and the more it burns him, the tighter he'll squeeze it, not realizing it's the squeezing of this burning cauldron that's actually going to take his life.

And bitterness is like that. It's grabbing a situation and squeezing it to your heart and refusing to let it go. The longer we hold onto it, the more it burns us and eventually takes away our life.

May God grant you grace because we are going to have to be a people of forgiveness or we will not make it through the coming days. I'm warning you tonight. I'm warning you.

You will not make it through the coming days if you don't forgive. Forgiveness is not an option. It's a command.

Forgiveness is something we fully realize that we have to do. It's not just an add-on to all the Christian experience that we have. We have to forgive.

And by God's grace, we can forgive. By God's grace, we can be given a new heart and a new mind and a new spirit that wants to be a partaker, not just receiving, but also giving the forgiveness of God. And so Father, as we prepare to come to the communion table tonight, Lord Jesus Christ, we recognize that this whole world is rising up in bitterness and everybody has a grievance against somebody else.

God, it's a day of almost unspeakable hatred, vilification of people on every side. Lord, this is an opportunity for all of us who know you to be ambassadors of another kingdom. Give us the grace to forgive.

Give us the grace to receive and give this great forgiveness that was won for us on the cross 2,000 years ago. We recognize, Lord, you're not asking us to do this in our own strength, for we could not do it. But by the power of your indwelling Holy Spirit, we have the ability to release every debt.

I had to do it. Everyone in this room has had to do it. And God, I don't want to ever embrace a grievance against a single person of this world.

I ask you for the gift tonight of a forgiving heart to be given to your people, Lord. The faith to believe that this is a good thing to do and the right thing to do. Give us the power to turn from our own reasonings and our arguments against your character.

Help us, Lord, not to be angry with your desire to want to forgive our enemies. We give you the praise and we give you the glory in Jesus' name, amen. If you could get the bread and the juice that you have with you, and we're gonna go to the communion table and believe, just believe, believe that the sacrifice of Christ, thank you, is going to give us the strength.

This is a solemn moment because the whole world is fragmenting around us now. It's happening, as Jesus said in Matthew chapter 24, that ethnic culture is rising now against ethnic culture, not just in America, but worldwide. The bitter divisions, the selfish divisions of the human heart are going to overtake many societies in our day.

But we are a city set upon a hill that Jesus said cannot be hidden. If we refuse to forgive, then we are a hidden city. But if we stand and we make these proclamations and do what Christ told us to do, then we

become ambassadors of his cross.

Paul says, I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you. The Lord Jesus, on the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread. When he'd given thanks, he broke it and said, take, eat, this is my body, which is broken for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. In the same manner, he also took the cup after supper, saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood. This do as you drink it in remembrance of me.

As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death. May I put it this way? You become a proclamation of the cross until he comes. Lord Jesus Christ, we choose to forgive and your ways do not make us angry.

You are right and just and holy and true and deserving of all praise and all power. As the angels once proclaimed at your throne, they will proclaim one day, we now proclaim the same. Your ways are right, ours are wrong.

Your thoughts are higher than ours. Your ways are higher than ours. You forgave us this incredible debt that we owed you and you saved our families.

So now Lord, we will not withhold that same forgiveness from others whose debt to us is insignificant in comparison to what we owed you. Lord, let forgiveness be the hallmark of our lives and deliver us, my God, from being partakers of the bitter spirit of this hour we live in. We thank you for it in Jesus' name, amen and amen.

Please tell your friends about this prayer meeting every Tuesday night, 7 p.m. Eastern time until about 8.30 or nine o'clock and tell them that God is answering prayer. Invite your friends to come in and pray. Notify those on Facebook and Twitter and every other way that you know how.

Let them know that they can submit a prayer request. There'll be people around the world that'll be praying for them and make sure you tell them that God is answering prayer in Jesus' name. It's been a pleasure being with you again this week.

Thank you for all the pastors and leaders here at Times Square Church. Thank you for Pastor Tim Delina, our senior pastor and the wonderful work and word that God is giving him in New York City at this time. It's great to be part of this prayer meeting.

Our music ministry has done some things. I don't even know what to call it. It's just a lot of boxes with people online where they sing a song seemingly in different places but together.

So you figure out what that means. I'm just describing what I see. That's all, okay? I don't know the proper words for it but we're gonna play one of them.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/JxfcCJeQ3Cc.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/carter-conlon/are-you-angered-by-the-forgiveness-of-god/>

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