

# Forgive the Only Option

by David Ravenhill

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*Forgiveness is the key to personal revival and is essential for releasing the power of God in our lives.*

**Duration:** 59:52

**Scripture:** Exodus 34:6-7, Matthew 18:21-35

**Topics:** "Forgiveness", "Mercy"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of forgiveness and the importance of extending it to others. He starts by sharing a story about a man who had an impossible debt and was about to be sold along with his family to repay it. However, the master showed compassion and forgave the debt. The man was overjoyed and grateful. But the next day, the man encountered someone who owed him a much smaller amount and instead of showing the same mercy, he demanded payment and even choked the debtor. The master found out and reprimanded the man for his lack of mercy, highlighting the importance of forgiveness. The preacher emphasizes that we are capable of great evil and need to learn to walk in forgiveness.

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## Transcript

It did not awaken it, it awakened me. I read a bumper sticker many years ago that said, some mornings I wake up grumpy and other mornings I let him sleep in. I trust you have got over your grumpiness this morning.

It's good to be in the presence of God, isn't it? Just to worship Him, you every morning. There is mercies. He daily loads us with benefits.

Not just a meager little ration that will get us by, but daily loads us. The prodigal said when he thought about the father's house, he said, there's bread enough and to spare. Not just that dad's got a little bit of bread, maybe I can, you know, twist his arm and get a slice, but bread enough and to spare.

Wonderful, isn't it? I want to continue this morning to sort of excavate a little bit for these next couple of sessions and then we'll move into another realm I trust. There is a portion of Scripture there at the end of Matthew, Matthew 7, where Jesus talked about the two men that built their house, or their houses. One built on the sand, the other built it on the rock.

And somebody said that in order to get to rock, you have to excavate everything between yourself and the rock. And I think we need to do that spiritually. Whatever it is that stands between us and the rock.

If we don't, then when the floods come and the storms rage, then the house will not stand. It may look good for a while in the good weather, when everybody's praising God and things are going well, it may look as good as anybody else's house. But the storms come and they will test again the quality.

It's interesting that if you look up in the dictionary, the definition of sand, it's fragments of fragmentary rock. I think we've tried to do a lot of building on fragments of truth. We've built whole movements on one little grain of sand, faith.

Whole movements on one grain of sand, prosperity. One whole movement on another grain of sand, but you put all those grains of sand together and compact them and you have a rock, the Lord Jesus Christ. It's dangerous to build on fragments.

It's dangerous to build on sand. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand. I want to speak to you this morning on the theme of forgiveness, because I am convinced after many years now of ministry, that one of the single greatest detriments to personal revival is the area of unforgiveness.

Revival is still a mystery to me. There's a sovereign element to it that I don't fully understand, I guess because it is sovereign. There is also man's side of seeking God, the hunger, the thirst after righteousness and so on.

But I do believe that we can have personal revival. I had the privilege of working with an older man of God back in the mid-sixties in New Zealand, by the name of Neville Winger. He has now gone to be with the Lord, a wonderful servant of God.

He told me the story of a friend of his who was a missionary in Borneo, that's East Malaysia, working there in the sort of the jungles of that nation, translating the scriptures. Working with him was a national worker. It's no longer politically correct to call them natives, but a national worker.

And as he was using this national worker to help him to select the best words and the way to write and translate the scriptures, they came across the portion of scripture there in Mark chapter 11, verse 25, when it says, when you stand praying, forgive if you have anything against anyone, in order that your father may forgive you. And of course the missionary was concentrating on getting the right words and saying it in the right way, but when he said this, the national worker was pricked in his conscience and he said to the missionary, why don't we do that? The missionary didn't quite understand, because again he was concentrating on what he was doing, and so the national worker again said to him, he said, why don't we do that? He said, why don't we do what? He said, well, why don't we do what this verse says? And realizing that God was speaking to this young man, the missionary said, well, we have to walk in obedience to God's word. Consequently, this man went back to his village and then from his village went to a neighboring village and began to apologize, ask forgiveness, because over the years, over many years, there'd been tremendous animosity between these two villages.

There'd been all sorts of bloodshed, all sorts of abuse and pillage and thievery, even murder. And so he began to apologize. As a result of that, the Spirit of God was released in that particular valley and a revival broke out that impacted that entire region, all because one person was willing to go to a brother and ask for forgiveness.

There is tremendous power in forgiveness. Now, we don't kill one another anymore. We don't shed blood, although that is possible, but we simply kill relationships.

We avoid one another, we move to another church, we no longer speak to certain individuals, no longer associate with certain individuals, we avoid contact, we begin to criticize and so on. And yet, unforgiveness really is like a cord that ties the hands of God from working on our behalf. Here is God, we talked about last night, the fact that He is the Creator of the heavens and earth, and yet this God, with all of His power, all of His majesty, all of His greatness that we've been singing about, is rendered, if you like, absolutely powerless by our unwillingness to forgive.

We no longer have access to His forgiveness, we no longer have access to His grace, we no longer have access to His mercy, no longer have access to who God is, because we are not willing to be like Him. And so we bind, again, God working on our behalf. Now, every believer here, and I know that's the vast majority this morning, we've experienced the love of God, the forgiveness of God, the kindness, the goodness of God, we sang about that again.

The fact that He took our place on Calvary, He became the substitute, the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world. And yet, why is it that we are so reluctant to extend that forgiveness that was given to us to others? And one of the greatest problems, I think, in the body of Christ, is this unwillingness to forgive, unwillingness to be reconciled one to another. There's been far more churches that have split over unforgiveness, over bitterness, over resentment, than there has been over false doctrine, or any other single problem.

This gentleman that I mentioned a few moments ago that I worked with in the early sixties had a saying, and he used to say to me, he said, David, we're all damaged goods. Somewhere in the course of life, we've been dropped, so to speak, we've got our dents and our bruises, and I imagine we could start on the front row here and go and spend an hour or two or three or four talking about all the hurts and the disappointments and the bitteresses and the wrongs that have been done us, the business deals have gone sour, the working with another brother that has turned and he's become now our enemy. Again, parents that have disappointed us, brothers and sisters that maybe have turned against us.

Again, all the hurts, the resentments. I imagine there's a tremendous amount of testimony that we can produce just in a congregation of this size this morning. We live in an imperfect world, and those imperfect people, again, cause us pain, and we've caused others pain as well.

And we need to know what it is to rid ourselves of all the bitterness that gets in our spirit, that root of bitterness, that not only defiles ourselves, but springs up and defiles many. I was thinking this morning when I was just looking over my notes that 22 years ago, my wife and I moved from New Zealand to Texas, lived there for just a little over a year, and then went back to New Zealand and spent another 10 years there. During that time, we built a house, and my parents built a house, and in the area where we lived, the field around the house, there were some small trees about this big, pine trees.

I remember rooting those up with my bare hands and planting them just outside our house. Those trees now are some 30 or 40 feet tall, and I would challenge and defy anybody in this room to try and uproot what I uprooted 20 years ago or 22 years ago. They have grown.

They've established a root system now that is so vast that it isn't possible to uproot. And so strongholds, or rather footholds, become strongholds. And unless we deal with those footholds in the early stages, they're

almost impossible to be dealt with later on.

And so it's important that we learn to walk in forgiveness. It's amazing what we are capable of doing, isn't it? Even as believers, the bitterness that we can have, the anger that we can have, the resentment that we can have. Two years ago, I was traveling with the revival team from Pensacola.

We were staying in a hotel, and as I opened the door of the hotel, there was the morning newspaper there that I picked up, and later on that afternoon, I began to browse through it. And there was an article in the newspaper that I have a photocopy of here. I have the original somewhere in my Bible.

The title is, Dad. And then it says, Revenge led to baby's life, comma, death. Let me read you the article, June the 19th, 1999.

On Father's Day, Amy Schoenebager found her infant son, Tyler, face down in his crib, dead. Two days later, just hours after the baby's funeral, Ronald Schoenebager told his wife that he had killed their son. The next day, he told the police not only did he kill the boy, he planned the crime even before the child was conceived as a way of executing revenge on his wife.

Tyler didn't die of sudden death syndrome as the coroner had ruled. Schoenebager said he confessed to the suffocating his seven-year-old with a plastic wrap. He said it was revenge because Amy, before they were married, had refused to cut short a vacation to comfort him when his father died in 1996, three years previous.

Schoenebager said that he planned to make Amy feel the way he did when his father died. He married her, got her pregnant, allowed time for her to bond with the child and then took the baby's life, according to an affidavit. It goes on to say that Schoenebager said of his confession that on the evening of June 19th, he wrapped plastic wrap around his son's head and face and then left the baby's nursery to get something to eat and to brush his teeth.

Twenty minutes later, he said, he returned, removed the plastic, placed Tyler face down in the crib before he went off to bed. Amy Schoenebager, 29, had been working that night as a grocery cashier. When she came home, she went to bed assuming that Tyler was asleep.

She found his body the next morning, Father's Day. Schoenebager, who worked as a tire retreading center, told police he confessed because the image of his son's face, flat and purplish from rigor mortis, had haunted him. Amazing, isn't it? What we are capable of doing, we get hurt, we allow that hurt to fester, we feed it, we entertain it, it grows, it becomes a root of bitterness, we plan revenge over a two or three year period.

Here is a man married that woman knowing, intending to get her pregnant, intending to allow seven months for the mother to bond with that beautiful little baby, all to get even, to make her feel the way he felt. We have a story very similar. I won't go into it.

You know it. The story of one of David's sons who saw that his stepsister was violated, or his sister rather, violated by his stepbrother. He waited for two years.

During that two years, after everything had died down, he planned revenge. And after two years held a party. During that time of feasting and celebrating and so on, he took the life of his stepbrother.

We are capable of such incredible evil and we have got to know what it is to walk in forgiveness. About 25 years ago, I sat under the ministry of David Duplessis. David Duplessis was referred to as Mr. Pentecost because of his desire to bring the body of Christ together.

And he was ministering on the Lord's Prayer, Matthew chapter 6. And he made this statement. He said, this is the most dangerous prayer that you can ever pray. And he was referring of course to verse 12 where we pray, forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

We are specifically asking almighty God to forgive us according to the standard of which we forgive others. He said that is the most dangerous prayer because it will be answered. The book of James has a verse that it terrifies me.

And it says that judgment will be merciless to the one that shows no judgment or no mercy rather. Judgment will be merciless to the one who shows no mercy. That's a frightening verse, isn't it? If anything should cause us to walk in constant forgiveness, we were asking God to soften our hearts, that verse should.

Knowing that one day you and I will stand before almighty God and instead of mercy we'll receive justice because we never extended the mercy that was shown us. I picked up a book a little while ago out of my father's library that is now mine. And it was quotes from Oswald Chambers.

An entire book where somebody has gone through all his writings. And under the heading of forgiveness he makes a statement. The forgiveness of a child of God is not placed on the ground of the atonement of our Lord.

That got my attention. Let me read it again. The forgiveness of a child of God, not a sinner.

The forgiveness of a child of God is not placed on the ground of the atonement of our Lord but on the ground that the child of God shows the same forgiveness to his fellows that God his Father has shown him. In other words, after you're saved you can't come and say, Lord, on the basis of the blood of Christ forgive me if we are not forgiving another person. The blood has no effect.

Took me a while to sort of believe what he said. Once you're saved, it's no longer based on the atonement but on whether or not you forgive. Again in Matthew 6 out of all the things that are mentioned in the Lord's Prayer Jesus could have very easily highlighted the kingdom.

Could have very easily highlighted the fact that his will is to be done. That we are to hallow his name. But instead, at the end of that prayer Jesus said this in verse 14 For if you forgive men their transgressions your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

But if you do not forgive then your Father will not forgive your transgressions. Interesting, isn't it? That out of that great prayer that most of us could say by rote maybe even backwards that the one single item that Jesus sort of highlighted and drew out of that was the matter of forgiveness when it comes to praying. And said if you do not forgive your Father will not forgive you.

Hence the statement here of Oswald Chambers. Forgiveness then is based on whether I will forgive and release somebody else. And so the Bible is full again of exhortations to believers that we are to walk in forgiveness.

Luke chapter 6 It says Be merciful, verse 37 Just as your Father is merciful do not judge and you will not be judged. Do not condemn and you will not be condemned. Pardon or forgive and you will be forgiven.

That word in the Greek means release. It can be translated divorce. It can be translated to send away.

Release. Let go of that thing. Whatever it is that is eating away at you.

That thing that has sat there maybe for many months, maybe for many years. That deep resentment, that bitterness towards a parent, towards a brother a sister, a workmate where you've been violated in some way. Let it go.

The best way I think to describe it at least modern way is to look of one of those helium balloons that are so popular these days at anniversaries and birthday parties and you know that that thing just automatically stays up there because of the helium and you know the moment you release it, it's gone. It's irretrievable. It just floats up and up and up and up and it's gone.

There's no way that you can get back that thing. Why? Because you've released it. The Bible says release and you will be released.

Set free others and you will be set free. I find there's so many believers that are bound. God is wanting to release you.

When I was pastoring five years ago now, a little four years ago I guess, I had a number of people in my congregation that were going to see a counselor for marriage and they were talking about how great this man was. Turned out that he was a Jewish believer but he was charging a hundred dollars an hour and a lot of people that were in my congregation couldn't afford that and so I called him up one day, introduced myself. I said, I've heard wonderful things about you.

Some of the people in my congregation have been to you for counsel and I made a suggestion to him. I said, would it be possible for you to come and do a seminar and we will give you five hundred dollars for the afternoon and instead of just dealing with one person, we'll get as many people together as possible. The church will pay for it and you'll get some money out of it but we have a lot of people that just can't afford your expertise.

He agreed and so the day was set. We advertised it and announced it. We had a number of couples in the church that came.

I guess maybe 30 or 40, 50 couples showed up and he spent most of the morning speaking about forgiveness and he said, as believers we really do not understand forgiveness and one of the illustrations he used, he said, you know, he said, I used to have a car, a particular car that was one of my favorites of all the cars I've ever had. He said, it was just a particular model that wasn't very popular and he said, I'd sort of fitted it out with some extra things but he said, I had to get rid of it and he said, I reluctantly had to sell it. It was just like an old coat.

It just sort of fit right and felt right and everything about that car. He said, I love that car but he said, I sold it and he said, about three months later, he said, I happened to be in the parking lot of a particular mall and he said, there was my car and he said, as soon as I saw it, he said, there was this bond and he said, I just wanted to go over and look at it and he said, I was so tempted to open the door and just sit in it one more time. He said, it meant so much to me and he said, then I realized I didn't have a right to that car anymore

that I had signed off on that car that when the person bought it from me, I signed the title deed and it was now in his name and it was no longer mine and I didn't have the right to go back and I had absolutely no claim on that car.

He said, that's what forgiveness is. We sign off. We release.

We have no claim whatsoever. It's gone. We don't keep mulling over.

We don't resurrect it. We don't keep it in a file and pull it out and think about it. It's gone.

We've released it. In 1969, my wife and I were living in California, working with Youth With A Mission and Winky Prattney, some of you know Winky, I know he's ministered in this country. He was a very good friend of mine.

I was the best man in his wedding many years ago now and Winky and I were talking. He was outside the Youth With A Mission base where I was working and he actually lived there before he was married and he was opening his mail and we were chitchatting and he opened a particular letter and he began reading the letter to me. The letter began something like this, Dear Winky, you may or may not remember me, but I'm the girl with the two mothers.

And then he began to tell me the story. He said, you know, let me tell you about this. He said, about two or three weeks ago, I was in Springfield, Missouri.

I was taking some meetings. David Wilkerson was supposed to be there and for some reason had to cancel. They asked me if I would come.

Springfield is the headquarters, as you know, of the Assemblies of God in America and he was speaking at the Evangel College. And on the last night of his meeting, two girls came forward, asked if they could talk to him. One had a problem.

The other was there for sort of moral support. And this girl began to pour out her heart about her life. But she said, I have a problem.

She said, I've been in the school now for whatever it was, six months or a year or something. And she said, every single night at two o'clock in the morning, I wake up with this incredible fear. A fear that I just can't shake.

She said, it happens every single night at two o'clock. And she said, I'm so terrified. A fear just comes into the room that grips me that I have to get up, put on the light, waken my roommate.

We've got to pray for a while. It takes me ages to get back to sleep and so on. And she said, I just can't go on.

And then she began to tell her story. She said, I was adopted as a child. I've never seen my birth mother.

The mother, my adoptive mother that took me. She said, I don't really feel treated me right and so on. And she began to sort of pour out some of her problems.

And as she did, God spoke to Winky and he said to this girl, he said, you know, God's just told me something. Two o'clock in the morning represents your two mothers. And unless you're willing to forgive

them, you will continue to have this problem.

And she was adamant. She said, I could never forgive them. I could never forgive my birth mother even though I've never met her because she rejected me.

She gave me up and so on and so forth. I could never forgive my adoptive mother because of the way she treated me, the injustices at least that she felt and so on. And Winky tried to reason with her that forgiveness is not a feeling.

It's the obedience to the will of God. He suggested that she call or write a letter. And she said, no, I can't do that.

And so the conversation basically was over. He had to dash off and catch a plane or something. And so here it was two or three weeks later and he is reading this letter.

Dear Winky, you may or may not remember me, but I'm the girl with the two mothers. The letter went on to say how that night with the help of her roommate, she did what was the hardest thing for her to do. She wrote a letter releasing her mother.

Winky had told her, don't draw attention to the wrongs of your mother. Draw attention to the fact that you had a wrong attitude towards her regardless of how she treated you. Mother, I'm sorry for the way I'd responded to your love.

I'm sorry for not being the child that I should have been and so on and so forth. Please forgive me. She said her mother then responded and I don't have all the details.

I was talking to Winky just recently and he said, you know, somewhere I must have that letter. He said, I'm a bit of a rat and he says, I know I put it away somewhere. I would love to get a hold of that letter but it detailed how the mother gave her a contact with her birth mother, her natural mother and she had contacted her birth mother for the first time in her life only to discover that her birth mother was a Christian and that her birth mother was looking for her and she was saying for the first time in my life I'm going to meet my birth mother.

She was all excited. You see the Bible says release and you release God to work on your behalf. God's hands are tied until we forgive.

Here was this girl again crippled if you like in her spirit with bitterness, with resentment and God was saying, listen, if you're going to be my child, I want you to demonstrate my nature, my character. I forgave you, forgive others. The Bible talks a lot obviously about forgiveness.

Moses prayed and he said, Lord show me your glory. How many of you would like to see the glory of God? I think sometimes we misunderstand the glory of God. We think it's some sort of big, you know, shimmering cloud that moves into a meeting and sort of startles everybody in.

I don't think so. It may be that but when Moses said show me your glory God revealed his nature, his character the essence of who he was. He said Moses stand here in the cleft of the rock and my glory as it passes by I'll declare it unto you.

And there in Exodus God spoke and it says the Lord passed by and proclaimed the Lord compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in loving kindness and truth, who keeps loving kindness for thousands,

who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin. That's the glory of God. A God of grace, a God of mercy, a God who abounds in loving kindness, who forgives iniquity, who forgives transgression, who forgives sin.

He's coming back for what sort of a church? A glorious church. Man's sin and what came short of the nature of God. And so he's going to reconform us into the image of his son, the glory of God.

We need to demonstrate God's nature and character. The psalmist says in Psalm 103 who forgives all our iniquities, who heals all our diseases. He forgives all.

And we need to walk again in that same forgiveness, releasing, forgiving all. Ephesians says, be tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ has forgiven you. And whether you turn to the Old Testament or the New Testament, God is always a forgiving God.

Even in the Old Testament, God taught the nation of Israel to forgive. Oh, I know we think of the eye for an eye and the tooth for a tooth. Let me give you a scripture, Exodus 23, verse 4 and 5. One of the laws, if you like, that God gave to the nation of Israel.

And he says this, If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey wandering away, you shall surely return it to him. Now notice here you are walking along a road and you see your enemy's ox or his donkey. Today that would be the same as his car, his mode of transport, his means of livelihood.

Not only was it transport, it was his tractor. This was an agricultural country. So if you meet your enemy's ox, you return it to him.

That is not natural. After all, this is the man that has despised you, this is the man that has swindled you, this is the man that has betrayed you, this is the man that has criticized you, this is your enemy. This man hates you, you hate him.

And you're walking along and you notice, here's his donkey or his horse. And you think to yourself, naturally speaking, ha ha, this is great. I'm three miles from home, it's five miles from my enemy's house by the time he wakes up in the morning.

He won't be able to get to work on time, he's going to be fired or whatever, you know. Maybe he'll never find his donkey, maybe he'll never find his ox, his tractor, he won't be able to plow his fields anymore, it serves him right, ha ha ha. You know, and possibly you'll pick up a rock and throw it at the thing so it gallops off even a little bit faster and further.

That's the natural response, it's your enemy. Get even. The last thing you want to do is take that ox and bring it to the one that you hate.

He goes on to say, if you see the donkey of the one that hates you, lying helpless under its load, you shall surely refrain from leaving it to him. You shall surely release it with him. Here again, you're outside, you know, some store, supermarket, whatever they had in those days and your enemy is inside, the man that hates you, it says.

And the donkey has collapsed because of the heat of the day and this man has overloaded this beast of burden to the point where it's collapsed and you know that it's just a matter of minutes before it's going to expire because of the weight of the load lying on it. It's struggling. And again, the natural response says, ha ha ha.

Serves him right. He's in there drinking, should have been looking after his animal. I don't have anything to do with this, you know.

Thank God, vengeance is mine, Lord. You know, and you stand there watching this thing just sigh its last, almost. The last thing you want to do is take the burden off it, get it back on its feet and return it to the master.

You see, God is a God of forgiveness. Even in little things like this. And we have many, many illustrations of that, don't we? Proverbs 25.

If your enemy's hungry, feed him. But Lord, I'd rather starve him to death to get rid of the problem. If your enemy's hungry, keep him alive.

Lord, I don't want to keep my enemy alive. Lord, if he's thirsty, give him water to drink. In so doing, you'll heap burning coals of fire upon his head.

Now, you know, for many years I thought, you know, this is where you do something nice to somebody that hates you, so you make them really feel miserable. In other words, your motivation is, you know, this is your enemy and he's done all sorts of nasty things to you and so you bake him a cake and present it with a big smile on your face, but inside, you know, you're really making him just, oh, feel worse. Nothing to do with that.

I read in a book on customs and culture of the Old Testament or the Bible where what would happen is that men would be out in the fields out in some of these desert regions and at night time, of course, they would light a fire. The fire was there to cook over, to protect them again from the elements, to ward off any sort of predator, lions or bears or whatever and it was a means, obviously, of staying alive in many ways. But occasionally, the fire would go out and if the fire went out, you could literally, you know, succumb to the coldness of the night and have problems.

Again, you were not able to feed yourself. Various predators could come and maybe take an animal from the flock if not take your own life. And what you would do then, you would look if your fire went out and maybe there on the horizon was another camp and you would see the embers burning and so you would make your way over and you would ask if you could have some coals.

And that person then would give you some coals from the fire. You would put those coals in an earthenware pot as they still do in many countries and put that pot on their head like they do in Africa and other places and you would walk back again that mile or two miles back to your camp and you would rekindle your fire as a means again of staying alive. We keep burning coals of fire on somebody's head.

We keep them alive. We sustain them. We bless them.

Oh, this is our enemy. But this is the law of God. You see, we've been taken out of the kingdom where we can have revenge, where we can get even and we've been brought into another kingdom.

A kingdom of kindness, of forgiveness, of mercy, of grace. We've got to learn to operate in those kingdom principles. And we have numerous again illustrations there of the book of Hosea, God demonstrating to Israel His willingness to time after time woo back this bride that was forever committing adultery.

And, of course, we have it expressed through Hosea. We have the story of Joseph after 13 years of being betrayed, hardship, 13 years in prison in which he was in irons. He was afflicted, the Bible says.

The Word of the Lord tried him. He was in chains. I imagine that he thought maybe at certain times of the year, you know, this is the time of my brother's birthday.

This is dad's birthday. This is, you know, whatever. This is all these various days when the family would be together.

He could have very easily grown extremely bitter. I've been deprived seeing my nieces and nephews. I've been deprived of this.

I've been deprived of that. I wonder if my father's still alive. I wonder if my mother's alive.

I wonder what's happening at home. I wonder, you know. And that resentment could have built and built and built and built and built.

And, of course, his brothers expected that after they realized who he was. And they concocted a plan. You know, dad said, by the way, dad said before he died that you need to forgive us, basically.

Joseph is able to say, listen, you meant it for evil. God meant it for good. What a beautiful demonstration again of releasing.

We've got to learn to do that. And so God is looking for a people through which He can demonstrate again His glory, His nature, His character. We are to be the proclaimers of the excellences of Him who calls us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

I've been reading a book lately, just grabbing it here and there. But there's a chapter dealing with the sort of eternal purpose of the church. And part of that eternal purpose, see, mentions this from Ephesians there where it says that now through the church may be made known to principalities and powers the manifold wisdom of God or the ways of God.

And one of our responsibilities as a church is not only reaching the lost and the dying world, but it's also to demonstrate to principalities and powers the manifold wisdom of God that we don't retaliate the way the enemy would retaliate when we are part of His kingdom. That everything in the kingdom of God is contrary to Satan's kingdom. We have that brought out, I believe, in the book of Job.

That was the whole thing, that He might demonstrate to principalities and powers the manifold wisdom of God that God had wrought in this man Job. Where Job says, I don't believe you God. The only reason Job loves you is because you made him a multimillionaire.

Anybody can love you. That's not genuine love. That's not genuine faithfulness.

He says, you take all that away and I'll show you what sort of man Job really is. I know you're bragging about him. You think he's the greatest.

You think he's a man that fears you. You think he's a man of integrity. You think he's a man of righteousness.

He's not really. Anybody can act like that when he's got all these goodies around him and everything's going well. God says, okay, I'll take you up on the challenge.

And I'm going to prove to you now the manifold wisdom of God that may be known now to principalities, to you, Satan. That it's possible to redeem somebody out of your kingdom. It's possible to change the nature from your nature to my nature, Satan.

I'll take you up on the challenge. See, we have a responsibility. Every time we forgive, we demonstrate to principalities and powers a manifold grace of God, a manifold wisdom of God, a manifold ways of God.

And when we don't forgive, there's no testimony to principalities and powers. There's no testimony to a lost and a dying world either. I heard Corrie Ten Boone share a little bit of her testimony.

How many years after the war, she was back in the particular town where she was incarcerated in that concentration camp. And at the end of a meeting, a gentleman made his way forward and introduced himself as the warden of that particular concentration camp. And he had seen a flyer of some sort saying that she was going to be there.

He remembered her name. And he came and he said to Corrie Ten Boone that he was now a Christian. And he was here to ask for forgiveness.

And she said in that moment when he put out his hand asking for forgiveness, she said, I had flashbacks to those days in that concentration camp, all the cruelty, all the abuse where my father died, my sister died. The days that we stood outside in the snow naked. The fact that we were deprived of food and so on and so forth.

All the indignities that she suffered. And she said in that moment she said something rose up within her. Why should I forgive? And then she said just as suddenly she said the love of God was shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost.

And I put out my hand and I said, Brother, I forgive you. We need to know how to release. Let me just take a couple of Scriptures before we close.

Matthew chapter 18. A familiar portion of Scripture but a very vital portion of Scripture where Peter comes, of course, to the Lord and he says, Lord, how often shall I forgive my brother up to seven times? And I think Peter was looking for a, you know, well done, thou good and faithful servant sort of response. Peter, this is incredible.

I mean, you've got it. I mean, you can actually forgive seven times. Good on you, Peter.

I'm amazed at your progress, brother. And Jesus said, Peter, no. Seventy times is seven.

Jesus was not setting a limit on forgiveness. He was saying, basically, when you've forgiven that often, you're automatically a forgiver. One of the writers says in Luke's account, in one day.

In one day. But when you've forgiven once and twice and three times and four times and five times and six and seven and eight and nine and ten, you lose track and you just, it's just part of your nature. And so Jesus gave the illustration for this reason, the kingdom of heaven.

Maybe compared to a certain king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. You know the story how one owed him ten thousand talents. I looked up recently in Haley's handbook just what that meant.

And a talent of silver, according to Haley's handbook, is between fifty and a hundred pounds. A talent of gold between sixty and a hundred and twenty pounds. And according to today's market, that's around four to five billion dollars.

What's that? Two to three billion pounds. That's some debt. That's some credit card.

That's impossible to get out of. That's the whole point. Here was a man that had an impossible debt.

There was no possible way he could ever, ever, ever pay off that debt. And his master commanded him to be sold along with his wife and children, all that he had in repayment to be made. I can imagine that man going home that day, heavy, sad, knowing that this day was going to come.

Not knowing when it was going to come, but he was called in. The books were opened. He realized the enormity of that debt.

He looked at his wife and realized that he'd never see her again. She was going to be auctioned off. He looked maybe at his two teenage boys or daughters, realized that they were old enough now to serve as slaves.

They would not be sold as a family. They were slaves. They'd be sold to the highest bidder.

If somebody wanted a young girl, there goes the daughter. Somebody wanted a young man, there goes the son. Somebody wanted an older woman that could cook and clean and so on, there goes his wife.

All the belongings were going to be taken. His house was going to be taken. And so he gets down on his face and he pleads for mercy, have patience.

I'll repay you. The Lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. I can imagine now that man going back to that home, maybe at the end of the day, bursting through the doors, grabbing his wife, waltzing around, just swinging her around the room and just absolutely full of gratitude, excitement, grabbing maybe the kids, maybe the little kids and holding them, clutching them and kissing them repeatedly and we could stay together as a family.

We're not going to lose our house. We're not going to lose our possessions. We're together.

Thank God. The next day of course, he goes out and he finds a slave that owes him a hundred denarii, basically about three months wages. And he demanded payment, began to literally choke the slave.

His fellow slave saw what was happening and reported to the master. His master calls him in and he said, you wicked slave, verse 32, I forgave you all your debt because you entreated me. Should you not also have mercy on your fellow slave as I have mercy on you? And his Lord moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay him all that was owed him.

I have never yet opened a commentary and found a satisfactory answer to the doctrine of this particular chapter. This man was forgiven, totally forgiven. His debt was gone.

He was free. But because he refused to forgive, his debt was reinstated. Every penny.

Again, I've never sat in a Bible college that I remember and had a professor really explain this to me. And if it ended there, you could sort of say, well, this is just a sort of an illustration. After all, Jesus said it's like the kingdom of God.

You know, it's a sort of parable and you can't take all the parables and you know, take every single thing and sort of detail it exactly and you know, so he was just trying to get across the point of forgiveness. That's basically it. Now, Jesus went on.

Notice the highlight. Verse 35. So shall my heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.

To make sure that we got the message, Jesus said, listen, this isn't just a sort of a parable. I'm not just going to talk here, you know. No, this is exactly the way my Father operates.

If you do not forgive, I'll reinstate your entire debt until you learn to forget. Some of us wonder why we can't break through into the presence of God. Some of us wonder why God is not as real as he used to be because there's something that has come into our life.

God is saying, listen, if you're going to be my child, you're going to have to demonstrate again my kindness, my love, my forgiveness, my mercy. Just in closing, let me take you to three portions of Scripture. Matthew chapter 5 verse 23.

If therefore you're presenting your offering at the altar and you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering before the altar. Go your way. First be reconciled to your brother and then come and present your offering.

Now obviously this was prior to the cross. Most commentaries would tell you that this is a sin offering. Here you are going into the house of God, going into the temple, you're bringing your lamb because you have got sin, you're wanting that lamb again to be your sin offering.

And as you stand in line, you remember that your brother has ought against you. Things are not right between you and another brother. And the Bible says don't continue in line there waiting for your chance to get before the priest and to offer up the sacrifice but immediately leave that lamb where it is and go your way.

First of all, be reconciled to your brother and then come, get back in line and offer your sacrifice. Why? Because God said you won't be forgiven otherwise. You're asking for my forgiveness.

You're asking for my mercy. You're presenting this lamb and yet you're not willing to forgive another brother. First, I want to see that you are worthy of forgiveness, if you like.

Go, reconcile with your brother. Then come and then you will receive my love, my mercy, my forgiveness. But here is the thought of bringing your offering over into the book of Ephesians.

Ephesians chapter 5. Therefore be imitators of God, verse 1. As beloved children, walk in love just as Christ has loved you and gave himself up for us. An offering and a sacrifice to God is a fragrant aroma. Here we're told that the Lord Jesus Christ brought an offering.

That offering was not a lamb. It was himself. He was the lamb.

But nevertheless, he brings before the Father his own body. Again, as a substitute for your sin and my sin. He was the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

And when Jesus is presenting himself to the Father, there is all sorts of abuse that goes on from the moment he's betrayed by Judas, a deep betrayal, the night in which he was betrayed. Isn't it tragic every time we partake of communion, we remember an act of betrayal. Following that betrayal, there was all the mocking, there was the scourging, as his back was literally lacerated.

And then it says they plucked out his beard, they grabbed chunks of his beard and pulled it out and the Bible says that his visage, his image was marred more than all the sons of men. His face was just blood everywhere. Huge gaping holes where they ripped out his beard.

And then they put a crown of thorns on his head, the Bible says. And the Bible says they were beating on it. It wasn't just sort of delicately perched there.

They were beating upon it. And then they made fun of him, blindfolded him, slapped him around and said, listen, if you're so smart, tell us who did it. Finally, they nailed him to the cross.

Now we need to understand that he was the man Christ Jesus who was tempted in all points like as we are. He had feelings. They strip him totally naked.

He's humiliated. He's nailed to that cross, again, blood flowing everywhere. And there is a crowd mocking him.

You know, if you're so great, why don't you come down from the cross and save yourself? Can you imagine what you would feel? Pure, innocent, undefiled, all the railing accusations, all the mockings, all the scourgings, all the beating, all the humiliation of that moment. How would you respond to those people? And the Bible says there in Luke's account, and you can read about all the abuse, the fact that they beat him and so on. And the Bible says he was saying, Father, forgive them.

He was saying, not just once, he was repeating, Father forgive them. Father forgive them. And I remember reading that a number of years ago, and I felt and sensed that the Spirit of God said to me, that if the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, had never uttered those words, that the Father could not have accepted His sacrifice.

When you bring your offering, and you stand before the Father, and you know that your brother has ought against you, there was a crowd, maybe of thousands, maybe of hundreds, that had everything against him. Hurling all the filth, all the abuse, all the mocking, all the scourging. And before he presented that last act of giving himself over to God, he reconciled with his brother.

And even Almighty God Himself could not have taken the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, His only Son, unless those words of reconciliation had been offered. If He'd have died again, with resentment, with anger, the man Christ Jesus. Oh, sometimes I know, thank God that He's the Son of God, but we forget, He clothed Himself in human flesh, and suffered the way we suffered.

He knew the pain. He knew the rejection. He was rejected more than all the sons of men.

He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. And here in this climactic end to His life, when all the pressure of the world, and not only that, but all the sin of the world is placed upon Him. And He knew

what it was to be defiled with your sin and my sin.

He said, Father, forgive them. And God was able, because of that act, to extend to you and I forgiveness this morning. And if we don't forgive, we will never know what it is to experience revival.

In our own personal lives, we'll never know what it is to experience revival corporately. Unless we can go to a brother, and we can go to a sister, and say, Brother, I'm here to ask for forgiveness. My attitude has been wrong towards you.

I've resented you. I've criticized you. And God, who is rich in mercy, has forgiven me.

And I want to ask that you forgive me, Brother. And then we release, and we untie the hands of God, where all the resources of the throne of God now come down into your life, and into my life, and into our life corporately. Because we've been willing to do what Jesus Christ did for each and every one of us.

Let's just close in prayer. Father, we thank you this morning for Calvary. Lord, the hymn writer said, Mercy there was great, and grace was free.

Pardon there was multiplied to me. There my burdened soul found liberty at Calvary. Father, we thank you for uttering those words.

Words that have reverberated down through the centuries to my life, to the lives of brothers and sisters here this morning that you forgave us. We crucified you. We rejected you.

And Father, we're recipients this morning of your love. Recipients of your grace. Recipients of your mercy, your kindness, your patience.

That you were tenderhearted. Lord, you displayed the glory of your Father. Father, give grace today, we pray, to those that are bound with bitterness.

Those that, Lord, even now as we speak, Lord, that memory is still present in their life. The pain. Father, give them the grace to release it.

Lord, let it go. Just before we move on to the next phase, whatever God is wanting to do, why don't you just release it right now? Really release it. Never to reclaim it.

And then go to that person, write that person, call that person. Don't expose them. Don't embarrass them.

Take whatever responsibility is yours and say, listen, I've reacted wrongly. I've held bitterness. Maybe a parent.

Maybe a brother. Maybe a sister. Maybe a boss.

Maybe somebody that's saved. Maybe somebody that's unsaved. Maybe a neighbor.

The purpose in your heart, Lord, before this day is over, I'm going to make sure there's nothing between my soul and the Savior.

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