

# Glad Tidings Spring Convention E

by David Ravenhill

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*David Ravenhill's sermon highlights the critical role of forgiveness and brokenness in personal revival and spiritual growth.*

**Duration:** 44:44

**Scripture:** Psalm 126:5

**Topics:** "Christian Life", "Compassion", "Forgiveness"

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## Description

David Ravenhill emphasizes the importance of being alert and attentive while waiting on the Lord, drawing parallels between waiting for a train and seeking God's voice. He discusses the significance of weeping in prayer, recalling Timothy's tears as a sign of deep connection with God, and the need for believers to be moved by compassion like Jesus. Ravenhill shares stories of forgiveness, illustrating how releasing offenses can lead to personal revival and healing, and he urges the congregation to cultivate a heart of prayer and compassion, reflecting God's nature in their lives.

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## Transcript

Waiting for the train, you know, you've got to be alert, otherwise the train or the bus can go if you're standing at this, you know, street corner just, you know, sleeping. But at the same time, you can't make it come in that sense, but you've got to be alert. And the same thing, I wait on the Lord.

Lord, my ear is attentive. Are you trying to speak to me? Are you saying something? And then the last one is weeping. The Bible says, They that go forth weeping, bearing precious seeds, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with him.

And Paul says, writing to the Philippians, or rather Paul writing to Timothy there in 2nd Timothy. Let me give you the reference, 2nd Timothy 1 and verse 4, where Paul says, Timothy, I recall your tears. I recall your tears.

You know, I'm not so sure that I would have wanted that said about me. You see, Paul isn't talking about Timothy, you know, never forget the big crybaby that you were. That's not obviously the connotation.

But I would have liked if I'd have been Timothy for Paul to say, Paul or Timothy or David, I remember your great teaching. I remember your great preaching. I remember your great this or that.

The other thing and all Paul says is, I remember your tears. But that was so meaningful to Paul. Timothy, when you and I used to travel together, the thing I remember were the days when you would break in the presence of God.

See, Jesus wept over Jerusalem. And that same Spirit of Christ dwells in us. And he needs to be able to express again that compassion.

Jesus was moved with compassion. And many times we become sort of callous, don't we? There's times in my own life when a season will go by. And if I have not broken in the presence of God, I have to ask myself, why? Have I become so callous, so indifferent that I can see multitudes, you know, in the sort of valley of the decision as the Bible says, it doesn't bother me anymore.

And I can watch television and see all the atrocities going on around the world. It doesn't move me anymore. You know, something's wrong.

You know, Jesus, if he wept as the Son of God, what about him weeping through me? You know, being broken. Paul says, I tell you with weeping, there are enemies of the cross. I mean, Paul was constantly in that place, you know, of brokenness before God.

And so we've got to ask God to break us. Steve Hill tells a story, and my father used to tell it for many, many years, a true story of the Salvation Army at the peak of their, you know, the peak of their blessing there as they literally took the nations. There were a group of ladies, I think two ladies, that had gone out to pioneer in a particular area and found it very, very difficult, ran into all sorts of problems, and they'd done everything they could.

Finally, in desperation, they sent a telegram to William Booth. And in that telegram they said, we've tried everything, what do we do now? And William Booth sent back a telegram, and it simply said, try tears. That's all it said, try tears.

And I think it's when we get to the place of real brokenness before God, that God can express his burden through us. You know, Jeremiah, when he heard about the desolation and the walls and so on, what did he say? He said, I sat down and wept. I sat down and wept.

And God wants to give us a heart, not just a mind. You know, the Bible says, we're to love the Lord our God with all our mind, and there's nothing wrong with a mind. I think sometimes as Pentecostals, you know, we get a sort of spiritual lobotomy or something.

But, you know, God gave us a mind, and we're supposed to use it. It's intelligent, God's intelligent. But also a heart, there's feelings that need to come into play as well.

So anyway, those are some things that I think as we, you know, just begin to get into the Word and begin to pray along some of these lines and ask God to give us a burden that God will. Didn't realize it was so late. That's close.

Father, thank you. Father, we pray that, Lord, you would make us men and women, that, Lord, love the place of prayer. Lord, we can spend an hour with you.

Lord, it's not a burden, it's not a task. Lord, it's a privilege to be able to come into the very presence of God, that, Lord, you've made a way. You've prepared a place for us.

Where you are, we are able to be. And, Lord, by faith, we're already seated with you in heavenly places. Lord, we have all the power and the authority of the throne of God behind us.

Father, give us faith to believe. Believe, Lord, for this area of the nation that is so bound. Father, we want to enter in.

We want to see again your kingdom advanced. Lord, break us over the needs of, Lord, the lost. Lord, people that are deceived, people that are blinded, people that are so mixed up.

Father, we ask, Lord, for a true burden. So, Lord, mature us in the area of prayer we pray. Take these words, Lord, use them again.

For your glory, in Jesus' name. Amen. And this is the end of these concluding remarks on prayer.

You listened to David Ravenhill. The five teachings given in June 2000 in the conference, Turning the Battle Toward the Gate. The teachings have been on God's presence, his dwelling place, victory in enlisting the devil, effective prayer life.

And now, David Ravenhill gives his final topic, Walking in Forgiveness and Extending it to Others. Here now is a word from the Lord. Before I say unto my people, you do not know my ways, but I would say if you would study me, study my word, look into my word and I will show you my ways.

I will teach you my ways and you will know of me and I of you and I will guide and I will direct you. For yea, I say unto you, there are days that lie ahead and yet I will guide and direct your every step. I will guide and direct every word that you speak.

You shall see things that you thought not. You will experience things that you never dreamed of. Yea, I say unto my people this day, I am preparing my church.

I am preparing my church for a great work. Yea, and it shall come to pass. Wait for it.

Press into me. Study. Search for me and you shall find me.

I say unto my people, I love you and I have a plan and it is prepared and you are a part of my plan. Do not get weary in well doing, but seek me and I will show you great and mighty things that ye shall accomplish. That I have already prepared and made a way for.

There is nothing that you have to do, but seek me. I will guide, I will direct, I will be there for you. But you must stay close to me.

Listen for my voice. Look for me. And I will be there.

Jesus. Thank you Lord. Some of you thought that it would be my long preaching that kept the meetings going so long.

But it is really the worship time. Now I have got an excuse. It is wonderful isn't it just to be in the presence of God.

I can't wait for eternity. And my wife will tell you that I have a, I am tone deaf. And so I, one of those people who are very adaptable.

You know I can change keys and all sorts of things all in the middle of just one verse. But when I get to heaven I am going to make up for all that lost time. You are going to hear me spiraling high above everybody else.

And just making up for all those years that I haven't been able to sing on key. But anyway it is good to be in the presence of God. Just to sort of linger there and bask in the presence of God.

I am reminded of Joshua in the Old Testament there that it says after Moses left the tent of meeting. That Joshua would linger, he would stay. He just enjoyed sitting there no doubt in the presence of God.

And sometimes it is good just to sort of sit there and take in again that wonderful presence. Good to have my wife here. She finally made it.

I know she has been up all day, up early this morning about 5 o'clock your time. And traveling and so on. So if she falls asleep just ignore her.

If she starts to snore just nudge her. And I will try and make this message a little shorter. I am not promising but I will try.

In fact I will even take off my watch. One of the things I like about this church there is no watch. People used to say about my father he doesn't need a watch he needs a calendar.

And I am getting close to that but not quite there yet. But I will do my best to try and keep it a little short. Let's look to the Lord in prayer again shall we.

Father once again we, Lord look to you. Lord you are the author, you are the finisher. Father we ask that you would come and Lord breathe upon your word tonight.

Lord let it not be the letter that kills but the spirit that brings life and revelation, understanding. Father let it be that sharp two edged sword, that word of God that Lord is there to profit us, there to correct us, there to reprove us, there to train us and equip us. Lord let it do all of those things in each one of our lives.

In Jesus name, Amen. I want to focus on just one thing tonight. What I believe is the greatest hindrance to personal revival.

And I am going to be speaking about forgiveness. I don't think there is any greater threat to revival in your life or my life than this one area of releasing people from offenses that they have caused against us. I had the privilege of working with an older gentleman in New Zealand many years ago back in 1966.

His name was Neville Winger. Wonderful old spiritual Baptist man. And he told me the story of a missionary that he knew of in the island of Borneo who was translating the scriptures.

And he was working with one of the natives or the nationals as they like to be called and sort of bouncing things off how would you say this in your particular dialect and what's the best words to use and so on. And so they were working their way through the New Testament. They came to Mark chapter 11 and in verse 25 the missionary gave this particular verse.

It says whenever you stand praying forgive if you have ought against anyone in order that your heavenly father may forgive you. And he was just going through the routine of saying now you know what's the best way to phrase that? What's the best words to use? And all of a sudden his co-worker this national or

native stopped him and he said why don't we do that? Now the missionary wasn't thinking in terms of obedience in that sense. He was wanting to finish his task of translating the scriptures.

But in this particular area of Borneo there was a tremendous amount of fighting going on from village to village. People are being killed. There have been all sorts of atrocities, all sorts of bloodshed, violence, everything else.

And this man all of a sudden the spirit of God convicted him that he needed to walk in forgiveness. He was one that had been involved in some of these raids on a neighboring village and this thing had built over the years. There was tremendous animosity between these two tribes.

And all of a sudden this verse again became real to him. And so he said to the missionary no why don't we do that? And the missionary was sort of taken off guard a little bit. And he said what do you mean why don't we do that? Well why don't we do what this word says? I mean why don't we go and ask for forgiveness? And to cut a long story short that's exactly what happened.

This man made his way to this village and asked for forgiveness for all the bloodshed, all the hatred, all the murders that had gone on over the years, the part that he played in it. And as a result of him asking for forgiveness there was a brokenness that came into this particular tribe and consequently a major revival that broke out in that particular valley. All because one person was willing to release another person from the offenses that were committed against him.

And this tremendous power that comes as we learn to walk in forgiveness. Now I doubt if there's a single person in this room that hasn't had some injustice committed against them. Some you know situation that has turned against you, some betrayal, some disappointment, maybe a business transaction that has not worked out in your favor and it was supposed to but somehow somebody you know left you with a short end of the stick so to speak.

Or maybe it's been some other area, some promotion that you thought was coming to you and you've been passed over because of your gender, because of your race, because of some other area and there's been an injustice committed against you. Maybe it's a parent that abused you or mistreated you. Whatever it is we can all tell sort of horror stories.

Maybe it was an alcoholic father that beat you and you've always held that resentment. Maybe you've been adopted and there's been a tremendous hatred because of your birth mother that gave you up or whatever it is. I mean there's all sorts of reasons why we carry offenses.

And again we could start on the front row and no doubt go back and all of us have got stories that we can tell. But it's how we respond to those things that is the important thing. How do we handle those things? And of course the Bible is full of stories.

Stories of people that got revenge. We have the story here in 2 Samuel. I won't take too much time but it's a story of 2 of David's sons.

One was the name Absalom and he had a brother, really a step-brother because David had numerous wives. He was the father but there were a variety of children who were not, they were half-brothers or half-sisters. But Absalom had a sister by the name of Tamar.

Tamar was a very beautiful young woman and one of his half-brothers and her half-brother was a young man by the name of Amnon. And Amnon began to lust after his sister. And he was so lustful after he didn't know how to sort of contain himself.

His cousin comes along and sort of gives him some advice and so he feigns sickness. He pretends that he's not feeling very well and he lies down in his bed, his father comes and he says, listen I would love if Tamar would come and cook me a meal and you know I'd feel better that way and so on. And so he sets this trap and she falls into that situation and as soon as she comes in the room, prepares the meal he gets rid of all the servants, tells them to sort of get lost and all of a sudden he's left alone with this beautiful young girl and he rapes her.

And then of course the word comes out of what happened and Absalom plans revenge. And the months go by and the years go by and two years later he sets a plan in place whereby he holds a party, he convinces the king that all of his brothers and so on need to be there and then when his brother comes or his half-brother comes he kills him. He has his men, his servants kill him.

And the Bible says that this was purposed in his mind from the very beginning. In other words, two years he carried that bitterness, two years he carried that revenge in his spirit, he was going to get even. And of course things have not changed have they over the years because human nature never changes.

I picked up just a number of months ago, well it was about a year ago now, a story out of USA Today. I was at one of the Awake Americas and many times at the hotels we're staying at they will slip the USA Today under the door and I got up that morning, had a little bit of time and I turned and I opened it to this particular article, June of 1999, the headline says, Dad, and then it says, Revenge led to baby's life and death. Let me read you the article.

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

Tyler didn't die of sudden death syndrome, as the coroner had ruled. Schoeneberger said he confessed suffocating the 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 trip to comfort him when his father died in 1996.

Schoeneberger said he planned to make Amy, his wife, 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 boy's life, according to an affidavit prosecutors filed to support a murder charge. Schoeneberger, 30, who begged officers to shoot him after he confessed Wednesday, was charged with murder.

He's been held pending bail. It goes on, Schoeneberger said in his confession that on the evening of June the 19th he wrapped plastic wrap around his son's head and face and then left the boy's nursery to get something to eat and to brush his teeth. Twenty minutes later, he said, he returned, removed the plastic, placed Tyler down, face down in his crib, before he went off to bed.

Amy Schoeneberger, 29, had been working that night as a grocery cashier. She came home, went to bed, assuming Tyler was asleep. She found his body the next morning.

Schoeneberger, who worked as a tired retraining center told police he confessed because the image of his son's face, flat and purple with rigor mortis, haunted him. Getting even. Unforgiveness.

Bitterness. Married the girl, got her pregnant, went through nine months of pregnancy, waited seven months until there was a bond between that mother and daughter, all the time planning revenge. Taking that child's life just so his wife would feel the way he felt when his father died.

Unforgiveness. Bitterness. Resentment that comes into our life, doesn't it? Now, we don't go as far, of course, as killing babies I trust and killing brothers and sisters and so on, but we do kill relationships, don't we? Or we move to another church, we cut off relationships, we cut off ties.

In a sense, we murder. We murder our relationships. Why? Because we've been hurt, we've been grieved against, we've been offended, something's happened and we don't feel that it's our fault and so on.

And so we lash out. And the way we lash out, of course, is to just cut that relationship off, move to another church, discontinue talking to that individual. And we bear these grudges many of times that they go on for years and years.

The very mention of that person's name, you know, causes something to rise up within us, that sense of injustice all of a sudden takes over and bitterness whelms up within us. The Bible talks about that root of bitterness that's springing up, defiles many. We spread then rumors, don't we, to get even.

We put the other person down. Well, did you hear what they did to me? And so on and so forth. And we slime that individual.

We take away their reputation. We have all sorts of ways and means of getting even, don't we? And yet the Bible talks so much about the area of forgiveness. In Matthew chapter 6, we talked about this this morning just briefly.

In verse 12, part of the Lord's prayer there is this, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. I remember David Duplessis, some of you are old enough to remember David Duplessis, called Dr. Pentecost and Mr. Pentecost, who brought about tremendous reconciliation amongst the various denominations and so on. He was a wonderful man of God, and he was ministering for us many years ago now.

I guess it would be at least 25 years ago in New Zealand. And I remember him mentioning this verse. He said, this is one prayer that you can guarantee God will answer.

This is one prayer you can guarantee God will answer. Now notice what you're praying, a very dangerous prayer. Lord, forgive me according to the way I forgive others.

And out of this whole prayer that we call the Lord's prayer, it is that one area that Jesus highlights in verse 14 at the end of the prayer. For if you forgive men their transgression, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive, then your Father will not forgive your transgression.

If you do not forgive, you tie the hands of God, all the power, all the resources of heaven, come to an end. It's like unplugging, if you like, the grace of God, the mercy of God, the forgiveness of God, the power of God. You cut yourself off from God working on your behalf.

I think there's an awful lot of believers, sadly, that have cut themselves off from the grace of God, from God doing any further work in their life because God is answering that prayer. I will forgive you according to the way you forgive others. If you do not forgive, I will not forgive.

And so we need to know what it is to walk in forgiveness. We need to know what it is to release people. The Bible says in the book of James that judgment will be merciless to him that has shown no mercy.

That's one of the scariest verses, I think, in the Bible. For judgment, one day you and I will stand before God. And the Bible says on that judgment day, it will be without mercy if we have not shown mercy.

The Bible says if I should mark iniquity, who would stand? We need mercy, don't we? We need grace. Remember Steve Hill saying, you know, we sing the most popular song in the world. There's amazing grace.

How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. He says there's not a song that says amazing justice. If it was amazing justice, all of us would have perished long ago.

If God executed judgment, if I should mark iniquity, not one single one of us would stand. We're here by the grace of God. And we need to learn to demonstrate that grace, that mercy to others.

And yet so often we don't. The Bible says there in Luke chapter 6, in verse 37, it says be merciful as your Father in heaven is merciful. Judge, and let me read the whole thing.

Find it here. Be merciful 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 the Bible says release, or forgive, and you will be pardoned, or you will be released. There is a release that comes when we walk in mercy, when we walk in forgiveness, there is a release that comes.

That word pardon there literally means to let something go. It's like a balloon, as long as you've got hold of it, you know, you can do with it whatever you want. But then you release it, and there's no way you can get it back, especially if it's one of these helium type balloons.

Or it's like an animal that is tied up, and you release it. You loose it completely, never to be able to restrain it again. And that is what forgiveness is.

It is releasing that offense. It is releasing that pain. It's releasing that individual.

It's untying that thing, letting them go, and you can never get it back once it's been released. And yet we have a tendency, don't we, to hold on. And we nurse that thing, and we nurture that thing, and we allow that thing to fester, and again that root of bitterness springing up, begins to defile.

It not only defiles us, but it defiles many. And we have got to learn to walk in forgiveness. I'll never forget back in about 1969, I guess it would be.

My wife's good on dates like this. But we were living in California anyway at the time. And I remember one day standing with Winky Prattney.

I've mentioned Winky a couple of times. But he was opening his mail. It was at the YWAM base in Burbank, California.

And Winky, before he was married, lived there, just on the property. And we were outside, and he'd gone to pick up his mail, and he was just thumbing through the mail. And then he opened this particular letter.

And I'll never forget, he read me this letter. In fact, just recently I asked him about it. And he said, you know, I must have that somewhere.

He said, I'm a bit of a pat-rat. He said, I store everything away. He said, somewhere I've got that letter.

I would love to get that letter. But the letter began like this. Dear Winky, you may or may not remember me, but I'm the girl.

And then it gave the story. And the story was this. He told me in more detail that he was in Springfield, Missouri, at the Evangelical College there, Assembly of God College.

And it was his last night. He was filling in, if I remember correctly, for David Wilkerson, who was unable to speak at that particular time. And he was there for a series of meetings.

And the very last night, a young girl came up, one of the students at the college, and she had a major problem. And she sat down along with her girlfriend and said to Winky, listen, Winky, I've got a real problem. And that is that every single night, I wake up with this incredible fear at 2 o'clock every morning.

And it's happened ever since I've been in this school, just an uncontrollable fear. So much so, I've got to get my roommate up, and we've got to pray together. Many times I've got to leave the light on in order to get back to sleep and so on.

And it's just something that consumes me night after night. It's tiring me out, I can't study, and so on and so forth. And then she began to tell her story.

And she told how she was adopted as a child, never met her birth mother. And her real mother, or at least rather her adopted mother, had not treated her the way maybe she felt she should have been treated. And she grew up again with tremendous bitterness and so on.

And as she began to tell her story, all of a sudden the Spirit of God said to Winky, Tell her that 2 o'clock in the morning represents her two mothers. And so Winky stopped her, he said, Listen, God's speaking to me about you. And he says, He's telling me this, that that 2 o'clock in the morning is significant, it represents your two mothers.

And you have got to be willing to release your mothers. She was bitter, first of all, because her mother gave her up. She didn't know the reasons why.

She never met her birth mother. But somehow over the years, obviously, she felt that she had been betrayed by her natural mother. And then the mother that adopted her again, she had held resentment towards because she wasn't treated with the same favor as maybe some of the other kids.

I can't remember all the details now. But Winky said to her, he said, Listen, you need to ask forgiveness of your two mothers. I realize you can't contact the one because you don't know where she is, but you need to settle that thing between yourself and God.

And then you need to write the mother that adopted you. And you need to apologize and not blame her, but simply say, Listen, I was wrong in the way I've responded to your love and your affection and so on

and so forth. And she said to Winky, she said, You know, I could never do that.

She was just adamant. I could never do that. She was so bitter.

And Winky said, Well, listen, I don't have too much time. I've got to go. I think he was catching a late flight home.

And he said to the girlfriend, he said, Listen, you need to help her. And all it takes is writing a letter. It has nothing to do with emotions.

It has to do with obedience to the word of God. Don't, you know, react, just simply obey what the word of God says and the emotions will follow. Here it was now, about three weeks later, and I was standing there in Burbank and Winky is opening the mail and here is the letter.

Dear Winky, you may or may not remember me, but I'm the young girl with the two mothers. I want you to know what happened. The hardest thing I had to do, it said, that night, was write a letter, but I did it before going to bed.

I wrote a letter to the mother that had adopted me and I apologized. I didn't blame her for anything as I, you know, followed your advice. It was my reaction, my response, and so on.

And so I forgave my mother and asked for forgiveness. And she said, I want you to know that as a result of doing that, that first of all, I've never had a problem sleeping. From that moment on.

That night, she said, I slept through the entire night. But she said, the wonderful thing is, and I don't have all the exact details, but somehow, her mother put her in contact with her real mother. And for the first time, she said, I've called my real mother only to find out that she is a born again Christian.

And she's been searching for me and we're going to meet for the very first time. You see, when you release, you set God in motion to work on your behalf. Here was a young girl again with all of those problems, but the moment she let go and she released that situation, God was able to step in and the grace of God and the power of God was able to work on her behalf.

And this incredible story. One day I'm going to insist that Winky, you know, spend a few days going through his boxes and digging it out because I'd like to put it in a book or something. But it was an amazing story.

I've never forgotten it all those years. It's just standing there. It's just sort of imprinted on my mind.

Just that the only part I can quote accurately was, Winky, you may not remember me, but I'm the girl with the two mothers. But that was basically the rest of the story. And so we've got to learn to forgive.

Why? Because God is a God of forgiveness. And we represent him. We are his representatives here on earth.

We are to exhibit his nature, his character. Be holy as I am holy. Be forgiving as I am forgiving.

God is looking for a people that will demonstrate to a lost and a dying world that we are different. We don't hold grudges. We walk in forgiveness.

And all the way through the word of God, God is a God of forgiveness. In the Old Testament, he was just as forgiving as he is in the New Testament. Who healeth all our diseases.

Who, what? Forgives all our iniquities. Thank God for that. Not just some of them.

He doesn't sort of pick and choose and say, Well, I think I can make it. I'll eliminate that one and that one. No.

He heals us. And he forgives us. And there are many, many verses.

But let me give you a few from the Old Testament. Because I think there's a lot of people who've got this mindset that in the Old Testament, God was a little different than he was in the New Testament. That somehow he had sort of a conversion experience between the two New Testaments.

You know, that God was sort of hard and judgmental and sort of always a little uptight and sort of, you know, always giving you a sort of spiritual backhand. Sort of staring down through his, you know, huge binoculars there and the slightest little thing we do wrong, you know, he's there to sort of clobber us. And then in the New Testament, you know, he's our Father which art in heaven.

But in the Old Testament, he was our Judge which art in heaven. You know, that's not true. God is consistent.

He's never changed. Again, with him there's no variableness. There's no shadow of turning.

And even in the Old Testament, God told the nation of Israel. One of the laws here, an interesting one, in Exodus chapter 23, verse 4. If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey wandering away, you shall surely return it to him. Now that's an act of forgiveness.

Here is a brother or sister, your enemy. One that spread rumors about you, you know, one that's done something that has, you know, resulted in harm to you or to your family or your reputation being destroyed, whatever it is. He's your enemy.

He hates you. He's always saying things against you and so on. And one day you're walking along the road and there is your enemy's ox or his donkey.

Now that's the equivalent of us having a car. So let's sort of modernize this. You know, here you are, you're living in San Francisco.

You know, with all these huge hills. And, you know, your enemy lives right across the street. And he's the guy that's always slandering you, always calling up and saying your kids are too loud and they shouldn't be doing this and that and the other thing.

You know, always making a nuisance of himself. And you see him drive up one day in this brand new, beautiful car. You know, let's say it's a Corvette.

Beautiful red Corvette. And he jumps out and you can see he is so proud of this thing. I mean, man, you know, he takes out his handkerchief and, you know, polishes it like we do when we get a new car for the first few days anyway.

And, you know, he sort of gives it another glance and then he goes in the house and, you know, he looks back fondly at this car and disappears in the house. And you're looking and you think, man, how could that guy afford a, you know, Corvette and a little bit of jealousy there. And, you know, you're staring at the thing and you look and that thing, it moved.

You think, it is. I mean, it's moving. You know, the guy forgot to set the brake.

And all of a sudden, you know, there's this incredible joy that overtakes you. Because you think, wow, this is incredible. I couldn't get even in a more better way than this, you know.

And you see the thing and it begins to roll a little bit more and more and, you know, head down the hill and you... And what do you do? According to the Bible, you run out and you set the brake. Oh. See, that's your enemy's ox or his donkey wandering away.

He can't plow his fields. There's no transport. And what do you do? You take it back to him.

The next verse, if you see the donkey or the one who hates you lying helpless under its load, you shall refrain from leaving it. You shall surely release it with him. So here's the donkey again, burden bearer.

The only transport this person has and it's collapsed under the load, the heat maybe of the day. And you know that if it stays there, it's going to suffocate, it's going to die and that's the end. You know, I mean, this is a thing of value and yet at the same time, this is somebody that hates you.

Now you had nothing to do with this. I mean, you didn't cause that to happen. You see, you have an opportunity of extending mercy, grace to that situation.

He's your enemy, but you don't treat him as your enemy. Forgiveness. And God, all the way through the word of God, speaks about this matter of forgiveness.

Proverbs chapter 25, we have the admonition there. If your enemy is hungry, what are you supposed to do? Feed him. Oh, that doesn't sound like the way to treat your enemy, does it? I mean, got to find Proverbs there, it's disappeared on me.

But you feed him. If he's thirsty, what? You give him something to drink. Again, this is your enemy.

You know, if he's hungry, good. Serves him right. I'll get even one way or the other.

You know, if he's thirsty, let him die of dehydration. Who cares? You know. Now, instead, it says that you're to minister to him.

And then it says, for if you do that, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will bless you or reward you. Now, we use the expression, don't we? You know, heaping coals of fire upon somebody's head, almost as an expression of making them miserable. You know.

I mean, that's the way a lot of people read that verse. You know, here's your enemy, he does something, and so you go bake him a cake, and you take it, and you say, brother, I'd like you to have this. You know, and sort of, if I'm nice to him, I'll really make him feel miserable.

I mean, that's the concept that we've got, of heaping coals of fire on his head. That's obviously not what it's talking about. You see, the context here is this, that in this eastern setting, these people would be out in

the night, looking after their flocks.

And it could be so cold that literally, you could either die of exposure, or you could die through the attack of some animal, a lion, a bear, or something else. And the only way of surviving, way out there in these barren areas, was, of course, to keep your fire burning. And the fire was not only a means of warmth, but also a means of cooking things, and so on, but also it kept away the various predators from the flock and from yourself.

And if your fire went out, you had a problem. There's no such thing in those days as just matches or anything. It was difficult to light a fire.

And so what you would do, you would look there, somewhere on the horizon, and you'd see some other embers burning, some other individual out there with his flocks, and you would go, and you would put your pot on your head, as they do in many countries today, and you would take that clay pot, and you would walk maybe a mile, maybe two miles, or whatever, to where this other fire was, and you would ask for some coals. And you would take those coals, and you would put them in that pot, and then you would go back to where your camp was, and you would rekindle your fire. And if you weren't able to do that, obviously then there was danger that could happen, again, exposure, death, all sorts of things that could happen.

And the Bible says in doing this, again, you're saving a brother's life. You're heaping burning coals of fire on his head. And we've got to learn, again, that God is a God of forgiveness.

And he wants us to learn to walk in forgiveness. You see, the most important thing after your salvation is your maturation. God is not interested in just a bunch of saved people.

He wants to conform us to the image of his Son. That's what he's really after. If it was just a matter of salvation, then as somebody said, the evangelist should just take out his gun, make sure you're saved.

Brother, have you got the witness in your spirit? Yes, bang, you know. And no backsliders, instant, you know. But that's not what it's all about.

God has left us here, and he's left us with problems and circumstances and so on, to mature us. As we said last night, we talked about overcoming. God has left the Philistine in the land to teach us how to overcome.

He's given us enemies, if you like, to see if we can extend the grace of God, the mercy of God, the love of God, the compassion of God. And many times we fail, don't we? We're anything but Christ-like. We revert back to the flesh, and we allow anger to take over, and bitterness to take over, and so on.

And God is not wanting us to do that. I have a tape somewhere at home that I've had for many, many years, and it's the story of, or at least one of the stories that Corrie ten Boone gave, and I'm sure most of you have read the book *The Hiding Place*, this wonderful woman of God that now has gone to be with the Lord. But she tells how after the years in the concentration camp where her sister and her father died, that after she was released, many years later, she went back into that particular part of Germany where they were incarcerated as a family.

And at the end of the meeting, a gentleman came up to her. She didn't recognize until he introduced himself. And he introduced himself as the warden of the prison where they were incarcerated.

And he said, you know, I saw your name. I saw that you were being advertised. I remembered your name from those years ago.

And he says, I've come to ask your forgiveness. I'm the warden. And in her mind instantly came this thought, this is the man that was responsible for my father's death.

This was the man that is responsible for all those atrocities. This is the man that is responsible for my sister, my precious sister dying, and so on. And there was that moment, she said, that all of those thoughts sort of whelmed up.

And this man said, I'm here to ask forgiveness. And he put out his hand. And she said, in that instant, she said, the love of God came upon her.

And she reached out her hand, and she said, I forgive you. And I thought, what an incredible woman of God. The Bible says, that the love of God is shed abroad in her heart by the Holy Ghost.

And she allowed, again, her life to become a vessel of the grace of God, the mercy of God. And she's able to embrace that man that did all of those things. I mean, we're not talking about just a little business deal.

We're talking about all the atrocities that went on day after day, standing there naked in the freezing weather, and so on, deprived of food, and hair full of lice, and sleeping on these, you know, boards, no mattresses, and so on, work day after day after day, seeing her aged father die, her sister die, and so on. And yet being able to reach out and say, listen, I release you. I forgive you.

She also tells on that tape the story of another man that was incarcerated. I can't remember all the details other than this, that the wife of this particular man used to come to the prison every time it was their anniversary, a birthday, or some other sort of celebration, and she would bake his favorite dish, and make some goodies, and so on, and then come and present it to the jail. For some reason, she wasn't allowed to see him, and she would say to the jailer or to the warden, listen, would you give this to my husband? It's his birthday today, or whatever, or Christmas time.

She would do the same thing. And after he was released, many years later, she talked about this to him, and he had no idea that she'd done that. He said, you know, I never received one of those gifts.

I never received one of those meals. Obviously the guards, the warden, took it for himself, and just downed it. I never even knew.

And she said that as soon as she found out, she baked, again, one of these huge meals, and she went back to the prison, and knocked on the door there, and said, would you give this to the warden with my love? Extending forgiveness. Oh, no bitterness, no resentment, no anger. God, I can do it now, because I can love this man.

I'm reaching out in forgiveness. And tell him, listen, I don't care. I want you to know that God loves you.

Regardless of the way you've acted, you've acted like an animal, and so on and so forth. But listen, who am I? I'm going to help you. I'm going to minister to you.

And so we've got to learn, again, to extend forgiveness. Matthew chapter 18. Let's turn to this.

I know it's a familiar scripture, but I want to, again, emphasize the importance of what Jesus said here, because we have so many verses devoted to it. Peter, of course, thank God for Peter, comes to the Lord, and he said, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me?

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