

A Very Important Message On Forgiveness

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of forgiveness, highlighting the need to forgive others as God has forgiven us. It delves into the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18, illustrating the vast debt of sin God has forgiven us compared to the offenses we hold against others. The message urges listeners to forgive from the heart, wishing good for those who have wronged them, and to seek reconciliation and restoration in relationships through forgiveness.

Scripture: Matthew 18:21, Matthew 18:35, Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13, Luke 6:37

Topics: "Forgiveness", "Reconciliation"

Description

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Transcript

It's easier to speak when you're seeing people paying attention and also it's helpful for you that, you know, I'm checking up on you to see whether you're sleeping or not paying attention like in a church meeting. So what I want to share with you, what's on my heart is something that came up in my daily reading. I came to, I don't always read a full chapter every day, sometimes it's just a few verses and think about it, but this particular chapter somehow the Lord brought to my mind again and again for a number of days and that's Matthew chapter 18.

So if you will turn there to Matthew 18, I'd like to share what has been on my heart from this. You know, I have through the years read sections of this chapter. For example, the first part deals with children that, you know, you enter the kingdom of God like children.

And then I read that by myself. Then I've read the other section verse eight onwards about if your hand offends you, cut it off. If your eye offends you, pull it out, verse nine.

That's a separate section. And then I've read verse 12 and 14 as a separate section. The lost sheep, man's got a hundred sheep and he loses one.

And then I've seen another section versus 15 to 20, well, really only 15 to 17. If a brother sins against you, go and tell him, take two people with you and if he doesn't listen, tell him to the church. Then I've seen this as a separate section verse 18 to 20, you know, so if you agree concerning anything, you can bind satanic forces.

And then I've seen the last part, verse 15 is another section. So in past years, I have read these as one, two, three, four, five, six or seven sections. But this time I sort of read it all together and I felt there's a tremendous connection between all these passages, even though I don't know whether Jesus spoke it one after the other, but the Holy Spirit has put it together.

And when the Holy Spirit's put something together, it's good for us to take heed to that. So it begins with how we enter the kingdom and that question was, who is the greatest in the kingdom? And that can, that is a question that constantly comes up in Christian circles, who is greater, this brother or that one, who is the greatest person in the church? Is it the elders who are the greatest? Or that's a question, it's a common question in the world. And it's not a question that should come up in the church.

The greatest is Jesus and there's no question about that. Our calling, all of us, is to, we are big, unfortunately, when we come into the church and we are big when we come into the church and we are to become smaller and smaller and smaller so that Christ can become greater. We must decrease so that he increases and we have to come to the level of little children because it says here in verse three, not just greatest, forget about greatest.

If you are not converted and become like children, you're not even going to enter the kingdom of heaven. So we're not talking about the greatest now. They asked the greatest, but Jesus said, I'll tell you how you got to enter God's kingdom.

And there are many things in a child we do not want to imitate. A child does a lot of foolish things. And that's why we are told in 1 Corinthians 14, that don't be like a child in thinking, 1 Corinthians 14, 20.

We must be mature in our thinking, he says there. But in the matter of doing something evil, something that will hurt other people, something that's going to speak against other people or do something that will, what is evil? Anything that will exalt you above another brother in the church, it's evil. Anything you do to try and prove that you're a little better, you're a little greater, or you try to do something, some ministry or want to show that you sing better or preach better or anything, it's evil.

Because a little baby in a cradle has got no thought of trying to show that he's better than anyone else. He's not even trying to show he's better than the other baby you saw yesterday. There's no question of comparison in the mind of a baby lying in a cradle.

As they grow up, they develop these habits and little children often compare themselves with others, even in the act humble in their minds, they're thinking I'm better than so and so and so on. It's evil. It's an evil thing that came from the devil and it's the opposite of humility.

So this is what Jesus said is the greatest. We got to begin there. If you want to understand what the Lord is trying to say in this chapter, begin with be like a little child who majors in humility.

In India, we have a lot of maidservants who work in the house. They very often work in a very hidden way, the masters and visitors and I'll never see them. And I have learned a lot through the years as I've meditated on what a child should be like, what a baby in a cradle is like and what a hidden maidservant

does behind the scenes, never allowing herself to be seen by visitors.

And yet all the work, maybe all the cooking sometimes was done by that maidservant or all the cleaning up of the house was done by the maidservant, but the master and mistress get the credit for it. Nobody knows it was a maidservant who did it all. Great person to meditate on and the many like that in India in our home.

So it's been very profitable for me to meditate on what Jesus meant when he said be like a maidservant and what Jesus meant when he said be like a child. A child is something we see all the time and you can meditate on it. There's a lot more pride in us, my brothers and sisters, than we imagine.

We can think you're very humble people, but ask God to show you, compare you with a little child, compare you with one of those hidden maidservants who never seeks prominence. And that's how the kingdom of God is going to be. And if we don't realize it now, we're going to get a tremendous shock when the Lord comes and we enter heaven and we find it's a completely different atmosphere from what we saw in the church, completely different.

And it should not be. A new covenant church should have more and more the atmosphere of heaven. And the primary thing there in heaven is people are like little children in humility, not thinking evil, not imagining that I'm better than others or proud in any way.

We're not there yet because we've got the poison of Adam in our flesh. But what I say is we got to work out our salvation till we become like little children. Then he goes on to say about our attitude to these children and weaker ones in our church.

If you receive a child in my name, you receive me. You know, the Pharisees never cared for children. That's why the disciples drove them away.

But Jesus cared for children. And the more we become like Christ, the more we will value little children, speak to little children respectfully, and not treat them like just unimportant members of the church. No.

We value them. You receive one child in my name. You know, there are two people that Jesus said if you receive them, it would be like receiving him himself.

One was in Matthew 10. He said about if you receive an apostle in my name, it's like receiving me. He said to verse 42, his apostles, anyone who receives you receives me.

So you receive an apostle, you're receiving Christ. But there are very, very few apostles in the world. It's very difficult to find them.

So you can't receive an apostle, but you can receive a child. He said the same thing he said about an apostle. He says in Matthew 18, 5, if you receive a child in my name, and not doesn't have to be your child, you receive a child, you welcome and speak to a child.

It's like talking to Jesus. Wonderful. I wonder if we are seeking to pursue that.

And in contrast, if you do something or behave in such a way or speak in such a way that you stumble one of these little children, that means something they see you doing or speaking in a church meeting or in your home or towards some unknown child in the market or anywhere you see them and they see the way you look at that child, or maybe it's a poor child or one who does something foolish and you're the smart

person. You don't do such foolish things. And you look down on that child.

You know what Jesus said? If you do that, take a heavy millstone tied around your neck and go and jump into the sea. And he specified it must not be a millstone. It must be a heavy millstone.

And the margin of my Bible says it's the type of millstones that donkeys pull around when they're trying to grind the grain or something. Ooh, just make sure it's really heavy so that you don't come up from the bottom of the sea. A lot of people sometimes say, Brother Zach speaks so hard.

You should see how Jesus spoke. Imagine a preacher who says, go and tie a heavy millstone around your neck and go and drown in the sea, brother. That was Jesus, by the way, the meek and gentle Jesus.

We have such a wrong concept of Christ as one who was just washing feet and putting his arms around lepers. No, he also spoke strong words to those who hurt others, not to those who fail or stumble. The man who stumbled most of all was the thief on the cross.

And Jesus had such kind words to speak to him, saying you'll walk with me in paradise today. But whenever we hurt others, remember the first person that God cursed in the human race, the first person God cursed was not Adam. It was Cain.

When Adam sinned, God did not curse him. Read Genesis 3. He cursed the ground. But the next chapter, when Cain sinned, God told him, you are cursed.

What was the difference? In Adam's sin, he hurt himself. He got thrown out of the garden. Cain hurt somebody else.

And when you as a child of God hurt somebody else, you're committing Genesis 4 type of sin, not Genesis 3 type of sin. If you just get drunk or take drugs, things which, you know, are bad, you hurt yourself. Okay.

But if you gossip and speak evil of others and hurt others in some way or by your attitude towards them, you're committing a Genesis 4 sin. Please remember these two type of sins. Genesis 3 where you hurt yourself and Genesis 4 where you hurt others.

That's the point here. If you're one of those who hurt others, maybe a weak one, you should tie a millstone around your neck and go and drown yourself in the sea and don't come up. I don't know whether we take these words of Jesus seriously.

Jesus said heaven and earth will pass away, my words will not pass away. Then he goes on to say that there will always be such people in the world, verse 7. You can't prevent it. The world is full of such people.

But make sure you are not one of those people who cause others to stumble, verse 7. Go unto that person through whom the stumbling comes. And so he says if there's something in you which causes the stumbling, some characteristic of yours, some habit of yours, some way you react to others or deal with others or speak to others, cut it off. Is it your hand or your foot or your eye, verse 8 and 9, which is very essential for you for life? But unfortunately, that particular thing in your life is causing others to stumble.

Even though it's essential for life like a hand or a foot or an eye, cut it off. It's better to go to heaven without those things that you stumbled others with than go to hell. Oh, you know, in Matthew 5, he said about anger and sexual lust that can lead people to hell.

Here he talks about stumbling others can lead people to hell. Read Matthew 18, verse 6 to 10 together. And you'll see, even here's another.

I used to always think it was only anger and sexual lust that drove people to hell. Here it says you stumble others. It's better to, whatever causes you to stumble, throw it away.

Otherwise, you can go to hell, verse 9. He's talking about stumbling others, verse 8 and 9. He's not talking about anger and sexual lust here like over there in Matthew 5. Here it is doing something that causes somebody else to be hurt and stumble. Dear brothers, sisters, beware. That's all I can say.

I can't change your lives, but I can warn you of the warnings Jesus gave. So these little ones he says you despise, these weak believers, you know, we can look down on people as weak believers. The other little ones you cause to stumble, you ignore them because you're always hanging around with the spiritual crowd.

You know, you feel that it's always my spiritual growth comes only by always spending time with really spiritual people. There was a godly lady who lived 500 years ago in France called Madame Guillaume. She was Roman Catholic but with a Protestant faith, and she was imprisoned for her faith.

One of the things she said, I never forget, I've read some of her writings. She said, don't think that it's only fellowship with godly people. I'm paraphrasing her words, which will help you to grow spiritually.

Sometimes you mingle with ordinary people, believers, ordinary believers, and you can grow spiritually. And I found that through the years in India, mingling with believers who were converted 40 years after me, and I've been blessed by that. So don't despise one of these little ones, verse 10.

No, because I say to you, the angels in heaven continually watch the face of my father in heaven. And then he says, even that one you despise, verse 11. I have come to save even that person.

Maybe that person did something wrong or is foolish. You despise that person because of that. You despise that person because of that habit that person has or that action that person did.

But Jesus says, I look at that person differently. I have come to save that person. I have come to die for that person, to save that person who you just look down upon.

I would encourage you brothers to meditate on this. I have to go through this chapter quickly, but I would urge you to meditate on this. It's been such a blessing to my own heart.

And I preach to myself before I preach to others. And then he goes on to tell this parable of the hundred sheep, which also comes in Luke 15. But in the context here in Matthew 18 and verse 12, he's talking about a little one.

He's talking about a little child who's gone astray or some very weak believer who's gone astray in your church, one whom you despise. When you think, yeah, that's just a nobody. Then Jesus says, I came for that person too.

I came to die for that person who you just ignore. I was willing to go all the way to the cross to save that little one whom you despise. Please let that remain in your mind forever.

And God looks at a lot of people in our church very different from the way we look at them. He's after the one who's lost. See, there's a difference in the story that Jesus said, the parables that Jesus spoke in Luke 15.

One is this parable of a sheep that went astray. And the other parable was of a rebellious son who defied his father and said, I don't want any respect for you. I don't want to be here.

I'm going away. One went astray. The other was rebellious.

And in a church, we must distinguish between one who's rebellious and one who went astray. Maybe he did something foolish or did something wrong or not so spiritual in your eyes. So there I see a difference in the way in Luke 15 how God treats the one who went astray like a sheep.

You know, a sheep did not rebel against the shepherd and say, I'm fed up with your flock. I'm walking off myself. That's not what the sheep did.

It went astray. That's what it says in verse 12 here. Went astray means it sort of missed the path.

It thought the path was here, but that went over the cliff. Whereas the rebellious son didn't go astray. He was a rebel.

And in the years that we worked in India, I've always encouraged elders to distinguish between one who's gone astray and a rebel. How shall we treat the one who went astray and how shall we treat the rebel in the church? Both left the church or, you know, we got to discipline them or what shall we do? Here's one brother who went astray. Maybe weakness, foolishness.

Maybe he fell into pornography. I don't know. Jesus says if you're a good shepherd, you will go after that person and not just preach to him, but carry him on your shoulder, spiritually speaking, and rejoice when he responds to your call and when he's come back into the flock.

An example which is very rare to find among elders who are true shepherds. But I've said if the person who left your church is like the rebel, don't go after him. The love of God is seen in going after a sheep who went astray.

And the love of God is seen in not going after a prodigal son who wasted his father's property and rebelled against his dad, went away from God in a spirit of rebellion against the church. Don't go after him. Ignore him.

And you hear that it's going worse and worse with him, let it go worse and worse with him. Don't send him money. The love of God is seen in that story of the prodigal son that the father never sent a single cent to that wayward son.

And if he heard, hey, your son has reached the level of the pigs, the dad's attitude was let him be with the pigs until he repents. That is the love of God. That type of love which reaches out for a sheep gone astray and which ignores a son who is at the level of the pigs is the true love of God which is balanced.

If you want a balanced picture of the love of God, read those two parables in Luke chapter 15. What was the result? If the dad had kept on sending money, you know, sending checks to the son in the far country, hey, I heard you ran out of money, I forgive you, here's some more money. He would never have come back to the father's house.

He would have been lost forever and gone to hell. The love of God is seen in the fact that he acted tough with him. I'm not going to help you in any way.

I know it's pretty bad with you and maybe you're sick and you're getting into debt and all types of problems. Yeah, let it be. You haven't yet come to the level of the pigs.

I'm waiting until you come to the level of the pigs. And then you will turn around and come to me and then I'll have a feast here for you. I'll rejoice with you.

That's how God is. If you want to be like Jesus, if you want to be like God, read that story and see what our attitude should be. But coming back to this here in Matthew 18, he rejoices over this one that he's found and he says, it is not, verse 14, the will of your father that even one of these little ones perish.

You know, you can look at the other brothers and sisters in the church and say, well, I'm not an elder. I don't have any responsibility for any of them. Well, you know, that's another thing that Cain said.

You know what Cain said? Am I my brother's keeper? I'm not an elder in the house. Dad and mom are the elders, Adam and Eve. God, go and ask him.

I am not my brother's keeper. That's the language of Cain. And you can sit in the church and say, oh, well, God's appointed elders to deal with all that.

I'm not one of the elders. Uh-huh. Don't forget that's the language of Cain.

I'm not my sister's keeper. I'm not my brother's keeper. I just take care of myself.

All the others, the elders take care of them. That is the language of Cain. So what should you do? If your brother sins, Matthew 18 and verse 15, go and show him his fault privately.

Don't go talking everywhere about it first. You need to talk about it to others as a second step, but not first. First, you talk to him privately because he probably doesn't know the wrong that he did.

He probably doesn't know that he hurt you in some way or forget about hurting you, that he did something wrong, that his conduct is sinful. So go to him alone and point it out to him, of course, in a spirit of love. Don't go without prayer.

And always begin by encouraging. If you can't think of one single good thing in that brother, let me repeat, that brother has gone astray and you want to help him, and you can't think of one single good thing in him, let me tell you something, brother, you are not qualified to help him. No.

You better sit at home and take care of yourself. Imagine, you can't find one single good thing in that person, you're totally unfit to help him. But if you can find at least one good thing in him, when you go to correct him, mention that one good thing first, and then he's more likely to listen to what you have to say.

That is why I say, always begin with encouragement. And then he is more likely to listen to you. So go to him and show him his fault in private.

And if he listens to you, you have won your brother. What is the aim? Sometimes when you go to point out a fault in a brother, your aim is to, he must see what's wrong with him. That's the wrong attitude.

Jesus did not come to earth to let people see what was wrong with them. He certainly pointed out many things wrong in people, but he did not say, I'm going down to earth to show people what's wrong with them, and they don't even realize it. Even when God came into the garden of Eden, and he said, Adam, where are you? It was not to point out his fault.

That was there. But think of those wonderful words, this devil who deceived you, his head will be crushed. And Adam didn't understand it fully, but God was saying, I will send my son as the seed of a woman to crush this serpent's head.

Adam, only then you can understand the depth of my love for you for having disobeyed me. Oh, what a long way we have to go, dear brothers and sisters, to become like Jesus. So easily we talk about new covenant and overcoming sin, and so many we say we've understood so many truths that other churches don't understand.

Where have we come to this love of Christ that is so eager to redeem fallen sinners, people who have gone astray, who rebelled and went astray? Even Cain, when he was angry with his brother because the fire fell on his brother's sacrifice and not on him, God went to him and said, Cain, why is your face fallen? Why are you so discouraged? Why are you angry? Those are the first questions he asked man after he went out of the Garden of Eden. Why are you angry? And God may have asked some of us that question. Are you angry with somebody in your heart? Why are you angry? Why is your face like that when you meet that person? When you see some brother, why is your face like that? That's the question God asked Cain.

Something is wrong with you. Maybe something is wrong with that brother, but something is wrong with you as well, God says to Cain. Because I can see that in your face.

I can see that in your heart. If you have, and then he goes on to say, you read that Genesis 4. I don't have time to show it to you. If you intend well in your heart, your face will be uplifted and cheerful.

The fact that your face is not clear indicates there's something wrong in your heart. You know what is in the heart cannot be kept in the heart. The Bible speaks of eyes full of adultery.

Is adultery in the eyes? Can it be visible in a person's eyes? Yes. I have seen men. I don't know anything about their private life, but I discern after a while, this guy's eyes are full of adultery.

Not every case, but where it is very obvious. And every woman must be careful, even if some man calls himself a Christian. See if there's adultery in his eyes if you want to protect yourself.

And the Bible speaks in Proverbs chapter 6 about proud eyes, haughty eyes. Pride, is that in the heart or in the eyes? It's in the heart, but it comes out through the eyes. Just like Jesus said evil in the heart comes out through the tongue, it also comes out through the eyes.

Why is your face falling? Why are you looking like that? You don't seem to be very cheerful. Yeah. So you need to see whether, you know, it says if your brother sins, Galatians 6, you who are spiritually minded, go and restore him.

You got to have a good heart. You can never help anybody. If Jesus came to earth with a grudge against people for rebelling against God, he'd never have been able to help anyone.

He came with a love that could not be conquered even when they spat on him and called him the devil and crucified him. Love triumphed over all that. That's the only type of person who can work redemption.

It's a long way for us to go. I acknowledge that myself, even after 60 years of being a believer, I want to be like that towards others. But I say, I mean, I've come a little closer, but it's still a long way to go to be like Jesus.

Dear brothers and sisters, meditate on Jesus. Let him be the subject of your meditation, not just doctrines in the Bible. We can argue till all eternity.

If you've got the argumentative attitude, you can spend all eternity in heaven arguing about some verse in the Bible. But that's not it. We need to meditate on Jesus and see how his attitude was, not about verses in the Bible, and say, Lord, help me to be more like that.

So your aim is to win your brother, not saying, well, I don't have much hope for him. If you feel like that, I have some advice for you. Don't go to him because you're not qualified.

Because before you meet him and tell him, you say, I don't have any hope for him. Maybe then somebody else is qualified, not you. This man is going, verse 15, with the aim of winning that brother.

So if your aim is, I've got hope for him, I've really got hope for him, I'm going to win him, you qualify. And if you can think of at least one or two good things that you have seen in him, despite all the faults in him, go. You qualify.

Otherwise, dear brother, sister, in the name of Jesus, stay away and don't mess up God's work by going and giving your opinion to somebody. And, okay, now that thing can happen, even though you go with such a good attitude to that person, it's, remember, don't ever forget how this chapter begins. A little child.

You're going with the humility of a little child. Don't forget that foundational statement in Matthew 18, on the basis of which I see the whole chapter is built. I want to remain in humility.

And that's how I go to this brother. And I want to win him. My aim is not to show him where he's wrong.

The devil has shown him that enough, and the devil is the accuser of the brethren. You don't have to do the job of the devil for him. He does it very well.

Please don't be a co-worker with Satan. Let the devil do all the accusing. Your job is to win that brother, verse 15.

And possibility may arise he doesn't listen to you. Yeah, that can happen. Some people are so rebellious he doesn't listen.

Well, you can walk away and say, forget it. And tell other people, I tried. There's no hope.

Because you're the great king, you see, and you did everything perfectly, and I didn't listen, and so there's no hope. No. This guy is so interested in winning him that he takes two more people with him.

And so that they can hear what he's saying. And they listen to what he says. And he doesn't even listen to them.

That means you go with a couple of brothers. You don't advertise it all over the church. You go with a couple of brothers and talk to them.

And he just doesn't listen. You see, this is talking about something, a brother who has committed a sin. It's not a brother who's got some bad habit.

No, a brother who you feel he's not so spiritual. No. You can look around at a lot of people and say I'm not so spiritual, I'm going to follow Matthew again.

This is not for those who look down on others as not spiritual. This is for a brother who has committed a particular sin. If your brother sins, not if your brother is carnal.

If your brother sins, go to him. If he doesn't listen to you about the particular sin, take these other two with you, and he still doesn't listen, tell it to the church, verse 17. And by that I mean how do you tell the whole church? I see it as meaning tell the elders of the church.

The elders represent the church. You know, when in Revelation chapter 2 and chapter 3, you read the Lord told John, write this to the elder or messenger, the main elder in the church. And then in the same, always he says, this is the message to the church.

So the message to the elder was a message to the church. So I see here when it says here, tell it to the church, just tell it to the elders of the church. And then the elders who are more mature, hopefully go and speak to that person.

And he doesn't even listen to them. Now, the question here is if a brother sins and in the margin of some Bibles, it says he sins against you. Like it says in the margin of my Matthew 18, 15, a brother sins against you.

Now, in most cases, I've seen what believers do is if a brother sins against them, they don't go to that person. They talk to everybody else about it. This guy did this.

But here it says a brother sins against you and you go to him to try to win him. When you think of the last time in your life where a brother sinned against you and you went to try and win him and you didn't tell anybody else about it, you first tried to win him. Okay.

The times of ignorance, Acts 17:30, God overlooks. All these years we were ignorant of it, but you heard it today. There's no more ignorance.

Now, Acts 17:30 says repent. Repent of that attitude you had towards your brother who sinned against you in the past. Now in future, do it differently.

Go to him. Try to win him. Is it a sister? Go to her.

Try to win her. And if they don't listen, okay. Don't take two of your friends who you know also hate that person, please.

Take with you someone who he will, who's probably on his side or someone, you know, who is someone he will respect, not someone who is a witness for you like they do in the courts. Take someone and because your aim is to win. You say, who can I take with me to win this brother? The aim is to win.

And if he listens to him, if he listens to the three of you, you'll win your brother again. But if not, then you go to the elders. And then the elders have to deal with them.

And if he doesn't even listen to the elders, what do you do? In the other cases, you're one in means you're able to forgive him. The whole thing is over. It's blotted out and you restored relationship.

But now he doesn't even listen to the elders of the church. You have no right to excommunicate him from the church. That's the responsibility of the elders.

Let them decide that because he's sinning against you, but you must treat him like an unbeliever. Okay. In other words, don't condemn yourself, condemn yourself.

Oh, I can't have fellowship with them. I can't have fellowship with them. You don't condemn yourself because you don't have fellowship with your unbelieving neighbor.

Well, in the same way, what does it mean to treat him like an unbeliever? Some people read it as though, treat him as if he's the devil. No. Let me ask you, how do you treat unbelievers? How do you treat your unbelieving neighbor? How do you treat unbelievers in your office? I'm sure you're kind to them and you're good to them.

If you're a good Christian, how do you treat an unbeliever? Many people misunderstand that verse. In verse 17, let him be to you like an unbeliever means treat him like the devil from now on. Jesus did not say, let him be to you like the devil.

Let him be to you like an unbeliever. Be kind to him, but you don't have fellowship with him. The only thing you don't have is fellowship.

The question comes, can we forgive a person who does not respond in asking for forgiveness? That's the point here. He has not asked your forgiveness for the sin he committed against you. What should you do? Treat him like an unbeliever who sinned against you.

How should you treat an unbeliever who sinned against you? Well, the example is Jesus. How did he treat the unbelievers who crucified him? The worst sin that was ever committed on this earth was the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Whatever sin anybody has done against you is not even a drop in the ocean compared to the sin that was committed against Christ.

And they were all unbelievers, and they did not ask for forgiveness. And Jesus forgave them. And he said, Father, forgive them.

And he even qualified it by saying, they probably don't realize how serious a sin they have committed. What an attitude to have when somebody sins against you. Father, forgive them.

They probably don't realize what a serious sin it is to crucify the Son of God. He who touches him touches the apple of God's eye. They don't realize how serious it is.

Forgive them, Father. So at the end of it all, you're still forgiven. So I see that at stage one, if he asks your forgiveness, you forgive him.

At stage two, you go with two, three brothers, he still doesn't ask your forgiveness, or if he asks forgiveness, you forgive him. Then the elders go to him, and he repents, and he asks your forgiveness,

forgive him. And if you go to stage four, where he still doesn't ask forgiveness, still forgive him.

It's lovely. I love to see that. At every stage, as far as you're concerned, you've got to forgive.

If he's an unbeliever, forgive him like you forgive all unbelievers. So you still don't hold something against him. You hold something in your heart against any human being, against any believer or unbeliever.

I refer you to Psalm 66, verse 18. If you regard iniquity in your heart, the Lord will not hear you. If you regard iniquity in your heart, wickedness or sin, that's like saying God won't pick up the phone when you call him.

Why won't he pick up the phone? He says, yeah, that guy's got something in his heart, some sin he's got in his heart that he's not repented of, confessed. It may be a grudge against somebody else. I'm not supposed to have grudges against anybody.

No. God is their judge, not me. And if he's sinned against me, what should I do? I should speak to him.

If I haven't done that, then I'm at fault still. I go and speak to him to try and win him. You say, I tried.

Okay. Try again. Tell the elders they tried, and he still doesn't repent.

Then forgive him. There's no excuse for retaining grudges. If you read Matthew 18 clearly, even if you treat him like an unbeliever, you're not supposed to have a grudge against him.

There is no excuse for having a grudge against any human being in the whole world. I say this strongly because I really believe through 60 years of watching believers in different parts of the world, I'm absolutely convinced that many of them have hindered their own spiritual growth by retaining this poison of an unforgiving attitude or a grudge against someone or the other. It's never settled.

And the devil sits back and says, oh, this is great. I've got all these believers in my hands with one little thing. They won't forgive somebody.

They're not like little children. Little children, you go and a little baby lying in a cradle, supposing you don't like it for some reason. Maybe he's more good looking than your child and you're upset with that or some silly thing like that or you don't like the parents and you go and nobody's looking, you pinch and hurt the baby in some way.

And he cries because you hurt him badly but nobody saw you. And you come back next day and look at that same baby. You know what that baby will do? Smile at you.

He doesn't even remember that you're the one who came and pinched him yesterday. What a long way we have to go to be like little children to enter God's kingdom. Don't take it lightly.

Oh, I believe in Jesus. I've told him my sin. I'm a child of God.

I'm in a new covenant church, not in these old, dead, old, old denomination churches. Dear brothers, there's a great need for humility. Great, great, tremendous need for humility.

And then he goes on to say in Matthew 18, verse 18, if you, okay, you don't have any right to put this person out of the church just because he sinned against you. Just forgive him. Treat him like an unbeliever who hurt you, who doesn't have any light on asking for forgiveness.

Forgive him. Father, forgive him. He's an unbeliever.

I forgive him. He doesn't know what's wrong. But then what should you do? It says, I'm going to give you authority to bind satanic forces.

There are satanic forces who come and cause problem in the church and cause problem in that person who has hurt you. Bind those satanic forces. Whatever you bind in heaven will be bound.

Whatever you bind here on earth will be bound in the heavenlies. Now, what does Matthew 18, 18 mean? See, there are three heavens. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12, he was caught up to the third heaven.

That's where God dwells. The first heaven is this universe that the psalmist says, when I behold the heavens, the work of thy hands. So in between this first heaven that we see and the third heaven that Paul went up to, which is paradise, there must be a second heaven.

Because you can't have a first and a third without a second. That's just plain logic. So when the devil was cast out of the third heaven, when he was an angel and he cast out, he became the devil, he was cast out, not to hell.

The devil's never been in hell till today. Into the second heaven. You read that in Ephesians.

We struggle with these evil forces in the heavenlies. Not the evil forces in hell, but the evil forces in the heavenlies. And from the heavenlies, satanic forces and demons have access to the earth.

One day, in Revelation 20, after the Lord comes and establishes his kingdom, the devil will be cast into the lake of fire. But right now, he's not in the lake of fire. He has got access to travel all over the earth.

God's permitted him, as you read in the book of Job. He wanders around the earth. And he's in the heavenlies.

Now, so when it says here, what you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, it's certainly not the third heaven. There's nothing to be bound in the third heaven. It must be the second heaven.

Can't be the first heaven. You can't bind the planets and the stars. It must be referring to the second heaven.

Compare scripture with scripture. So there are satanic forces that are causing all this confusion. Bind them.

That's the final stage. You know, you come to where you've tried your best with this brother. You've tried to be like a little child.

You've been kind and good and treated him like a lost sheep that has gone astray. All those things you read previously, and it hasn't succeeded, then bind the satanic forces that are influencing him. Pray for him and bind those satanic forces and loosen from the grip.

It says you can lose people and bind people, verse 18. And then it says here there's more power if two of you agree. Instead of praying alone, two of you agree.

That means two of you have got the same spirit. Don't go and pray with a brother who just takes your side. No.

It's a terrible thing to pray with a brother who takes your side. That's like these lawyers who call witnesses in the court who support them. In the church, there must be no such thing.

Go to a brother who's spiritually minded, who understands what it is to bind satanic forces, who understands that behind all these things that you see in people, there are evil forces trying to create problems. I've sometimes urged married couples in India. I've spoken about this different times in the church.

I say one day if you see your wife absolutely mad with anger, please, please don't go and talk to her or make it more difficult. You cool off yourself and try and find a lonely place, go for a walk or go to some lonely place, and bind the satanic forces that are influencing her. Don't just say, I've got a bad wife who's losing her temper.

Any idiot can say that. No, don't be that. But go somewhere by yourself and bind the satanic forces that are influencing her.

And I've told people, you try this with compassion for your wife, maybe who's under some pressure, and you'll find amazing results. And vice versa. If a wife finds her husband in that type of furious anger, or sometimes for no rhyme or reason, try and get alone and bind the satanic forces.

Very often in this context you see a brother sins against you, but ultimately it goes to the satanic forces that caused it. And if you're spiritually minded, you get there. And recognize these are satanic forces that have caused it, and I want to bind them.

And as I said, pray together with people who are interested in the kingdom of God being established, and not with people who want to take your side and prove that you're right, and that that brother is wrong. That's not the type of person you should pray with, because he's not going to be a help for God's kingdom. He'll be a help in a court case against your enemy, but not a help in fighting the devil.

You need to pray with spiritually minded people who are not against anybody. They're only against the devil. I'll tell you this, it's very difficult to find brothers and sisters whose only enemy is the devil.

But if you can find such a person, that's the right person to pray with. And then it says here, because, first of all, you agree, if two or three come together like that, the Lord says, I am in the midst. Verse 22, I'm supporting such a group of people.

And this is what a New Testament church should be like. Two or three people united with Christ in the middle, who've got nothing, no grudge against anybody, who are interested to bring the lost sheep back into the kingdom and taking God's side and fighting the devil, who's their only enemy. And then to help us in this.

I would say this also, two or three are not gathered together by the Holy Spirit in this way. The Lord is not in the midst of every two or three believers who say we are gathered in the name of Jesus. No.

As I said, Psalm 66, 18, if any one of them has got something in their heart against someone, the Lord is not in their midst. However much they may claim, Matthew 18, 20, if you regard iniquity in your heart, let me warn you, the Lord Jesus will not be in your midst. He died to save us from our sin.

And if you keep some sin in your attitude to someone, don't delude yourself in imagining that Christ will be in your midst. He will not. Okay.

Then we come to the last section, which is to help us to forgive. This brother has sinned against you. You know, it's difficult for you to seem like a sheep gone astray.

You're still struggling with that. You think, oh, what a terrible thing he did against me. It's unbelievable.

Sometimes I've heard people talk like that. I'm not talking about someone who sins in rebellion against the church. Let me distinguish between a person who rebels against the church and who rebels against you.

If your brother sins against you, this is what we're dealing with. Then Peter understands this. It's amazing.

Though he was just a fisherman, he had spiritual revelation. He could discern that Jesus was the Son of God. And here also he could discern.

The subject is, what is the Lord talking about in all these verses? Somebody is sinning against you. So Peter says, okay, I forgive him once. But I'm going to be a new covenant Christian, Peter says.

I'll forgive him seven times. Does that make me a new covenant Christian, Lord? The Lord says not seven times. 70 times seven means infinitely.

That means you keep on forgiving. But he did that so many times. Keep on forgiving.

But how can he do that? I've been so good to him. I've been so kind to him. Then the Lord says, I'll tell you a story.

There was this king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants, verse 23, and one of them owed him 10,000 talents. Now the margin of my NASB says that one talent was the equivalent of 15 years' salary, 15 years' wages. Okay? Count for yourself.

How much do you get a year? Multiply that by 15. You haven't stopped. That's the first step.

Your salary, your yearly salary, multiplied by 15, and then multiply it, verse 24, by 10,000. Okay? So this is 150,000 years of salary. Work that out when you get some time.

150,000 years of your salary is what this man owed the king. And he says, please be merciful because, you know, he was punished. He was going to be sent into prison and all his wife and children to be sold.

And he says, please have patience with me, verse 26. I will repay you the 150,000 years of salary I owe. What a joke.

As if he could ever do it. The king knew he couldn't do it. Who can repay 150,000 years of salary? And the king said, okay, I know you can't do it.

You imagine you can do it. You don't realize what a huge debt you owe me. And I really believe this, my dear brothers and sisters.

I don't think any of us have seen the tremendous debt the Lord forgave us on the cross. We sing so cheaply about forgiveness of sins. He cleared my debt.

Well, calculate 150,000 years of your salary. Multiply it sometime and see how many billions it comes to. And call that a sins.

That's what he forgave you. And keep that in mind always. And the Lord says, foolishly we say, oh, Lord, I'm sorry, I won't do it again.

What won't you do again? That one thing out of all those billions. And you're forgiven now. You're happy.

The blood of Jesus has cleansed me. Not only cleansed me, you know, the new covenant that I'm justified in Christ. And not only that, grace has come upon me that I'm also overcome some of these bad habits and you rejoice in all that.

And then you go out and you don't forgive a brother. A fellow slave who owed him a hundred denarii. Now that is not two cents.

No. A hundred denarii, one denarii is a laborer's wage in a day. So if a laborer's wages say, I don't know what a laborer's wage is in India.

It's quite low. We'll say it's what is a daily wage and multiply that by a hundred. Okay.

That's three months, three months salary of a laborer compared to one 50, 15, 150,000 years salary. So a hundred denarii. Okay.

So the, the, the, the, the, the, the, the, the, the, The guy owes \$2,000. \$2,000. Not a small amount.

He really hurt you. So really bad. What he did.

That's not compared anything to the billions and billions of uncountable billions. That you or the King, which he forgave you. And what does it mean? He.

Caught him by the throat and try to choke him. Verse 28, meditate on that sometime. How we can have this attitude of wanting to choke a person, make it difficult for him, make him look unacceptable to other brothers and sisters in the church.

It's choking that person to death. Dear brother, sister, please ask yourself whether you've done that to anybody in the church and whether you've done it to any of your family members who are unconverted, you married sisters, ask yourself whether you've treated your mother-in-law like that, yeah? Ask yourself, those of you who were cheated by your in-laws in the family property, ask yourself whether you've treated any of them like that, your family members, your wife's family members. Have you treated any of them like that, choking them? And you've forgotten the 150,000 years of your debt that God forgave you.

It's so easy to read these things and think we are wonderful new covenant Christians, not at all, this is elementary kindergarten stuff. This is not postgraduate stuff, this is kindergarten stuff. And he did not forgive him, even though that fellow asked for the same mercy, which he asked the king.

When he didn't forgive him and got him locked up in jail, the king heard about it and called him back. And I tell you this in Jesus' name, he will call you back. He will call you back, whoever you are.

And he'll call you, verse 32, you wicked man. But the word he uses, you wicked. Wicked is a terrible word.

In the children's stories you read about it, the witches, these wicked witches were always seeking to do harm to others. You wicked person, did you forget all that I forgave you? You remember how years ago you were a miserable, defeated sinner on the way to hell and you pleaded with me and I forgave you everything. I also told you I will not remember your sin anymore.

Couldn't you have had mercy on this person also the way I had mercy on you? Couldn't you remember? And it says here, now listen to this, this is the conclusion of the story. Two important verses. Verse 34, the Lord was angry.

First of all, he called him a wicked person and he was moved with anger and did not just lock him in the prison. You see, in the earlier cases, it was only being thrown into prison. Verse 30, thrown into prison and thrown into prison.

But now this guy, the master, doesn't throw him into the prison alone, but in the prison hands him over to the torturers. These are the third degree methods people use to extract information from the enemy's agents. The spies who came in, third degree methods, drowning them in water and all types of methods to torture us until you repay all your 150,000 years of salary, you're gonna be there.

You do not forgive others, your heavenly father will not forgive you. That itself is a threat, but more than that, your heavenly father will hand you over to demons. Those are the torturers today.

Demons who will harass your mind, who will make you sick in your body. They have tremendous power. If you want to know how much power the demons have, go and read Job chapter one.

With God's permission, he could kill all of Job's children, those demons. He could destroy all of Job's wealth in one day. He can destroy all your stock market earnings, demons or whatever other earnings you have, torturers and make you sick.

And because you're the head of the family, your children get sick. Why does the Lord have to use such threats just to make a person forgive somebody? Isn't it pathetic? I mean, this is the lowest level. The Lord should have to say, listen, I forgive you, man.

Can't you forgive on that basis? You don't do it. Then the Lord has to descend to the level of allowing the demons to get at you because he wants you to repent. And listen to this.

Is this talking about God's children or unbelievers? Verse 35 gives the answer. My heavenly father, he's a heavenly father who does this. Not almighty God, ruler of the universe, your heavenly father will do to you if each of you, verse 35, does not forgive his brother, period, no period, forgive his brother from your heart.

I've had to meditate that many times. Being a servant of the Lord for more than 50 years and seeking to hold up God's highest standards, I realized that I've been a target of Satan all these, particularly 45 years that we've sought to establish new covenant, teaching into churches. Naturally, I'm the target of Satan.

I believe it's a great honor that you are a target of Satan. And so he doesn't attack directly. He attacks through people.

So I've had my share of all types of things, accusations, articles written against me, and many, many things, heretic, cult leader, devil, all types of names, and even taken to court for 10 years all the way to the Supreme Court in India, fine. But the Lord stood by me in every one of those things. And I have to forgive

them.

Can you forgive somebody who took you to the Supreme Court of the United States, federal Supreme Court, and made you spend so much money for something completely wrong where you were not guilty at all? Can you forgive them? And not just forgive them, forgive them from your heart, which means, I said, Lord, what does that mean? That means you must wish good for them. You must never wish evil for them. If you hear that some evil befell them, you must feel sad.

If you heard that some good happened to them, you must feel glad with them. That's the test. That's the test I apply to myself.

All these people have troubled me. If I hear that something bad happened to them, I must sorrow with them. If I hear something good happened to them, I must rejoice, wonderful.

This guy's not asked for forgiveness, this guy's done all this, I want to rejoice something good has happened to him. It's only the devil, what the Lord showed me is it's only the devil who rejoices when something bad happens to anyone. God doesn't rejoice when something bad happens to anyone.

I don't, I want to be like God. That's what the new covenant is all about. Forgive your brother from your heart.

I don't believe I've exhausted everything in that chapter. So I encourage you to maybe listen to this message again and meditate on that chapter yourself and ask the Lord to speak to you as he's spoken to me. I got a lot out of that chapter when I took it all together as one.

When you come to the end, you go back to the beginning and say, hey, this is what it means to be like a little child. Little child just forgives. Whatever a person does, he forgives.

In fact, the whole chapter is about forgiveness. The whole chapter. Somebody did harm, forgive him.

It's like a sheep gone astray, forgive him, bring him back and et cetera, et cetera. Let's keep that before our heart and eyes always, let's pray. Let's bow our heads for a moment.

If there's one person who comes to your mind right now, whom you have not forgiven, even your children, brothers, sisters, one person's name comes up to your mind. Will you say these words in Jesus' name? Lord, I forgive that person and I mean it and I never want to have an unforgiving attitude towards him from today. I want to do good to him, Lord.

Give me an opportunity, I'll do good to him or her. Is there some father or mother of yours who treated you very badly and your father and mother are dead now? Forgive them even though they're dead. Lord, I've had such a bitterness against my father or mother the way they treated me or my mother-in-law or somebody else, they're dead now, but forgive me, Lord, for that attitude.

I want to be a Christian from today. I don't want to be a child of the devil. I don't want to behave like one.

I want to be a Christian. If you got a grudge against your wife or husband because they didn't measure up to your expectations, forgive, forgive, and don't forgive just because you want forgiveness from God. Forgive because Jesus forgave you.

That's the best reason. The second best reason is I'll go to hell. Not for that reason, but Lord, you forgive me so much.

That is the spiritual reason to forgive. The carnal reason to forgive is, oh, well, then God won't forgive me, I may go to hell. No, rise higher, come up higher.

Say, Lord, you forgave me, that's why I want to forgive. It's a wonderful thing. Lord, help me to walk this way all my life.

And if there's anybody else that comes to your mind, sometime when you get time, sit down quietly when you're alone and make a list in your mind of all these people and one by one say, Lord, I forgive them. I wish the best for them. I don't wish any evil for them.

And say this also, like I've said, Lord, give me another opportunity to serve them and I will serve them again. Heavenly Father, we deceive ourselves so much. We don't want to deceive ourselves anymore.

Your Holy Spirit is always there to give us light. We want to walk in the light always. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

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