

God Works To Perfect Us

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of forgiveness, highlighting the need to forgive others from the heart, even if they have wronged us. It delves into the concept of forgiveness in light of God's judgment, explaining that while we must forgive others, God will ultimately judge and repay according to deeds. The sermon also touches on the balance between forgiveness and fellowship, stressing the need to forgive unconditionally while leaving room for God's justice.

Scripture: Matthew 18:21, Romans 12:19, 2 Timothy 4:14, Revelation 6:9

Topics: "Forgiveness", "God's Justice"

Description

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Transcript

Well, it's good to be back after another time away. But sometimes these 10 days of meetings can become very hectic, especially when you have to speak three, four times a day. So the end result was that I got a bit sick.

And I was down the whole of last week. So I want to be careful today that I'll try and speak softly, which is always good. But you know, like we always do when we are sick, what we teach in this church is we follow Jesus in every area.

And there's a verse which I want to show you. There are many things we see in the scriptures which many people don't believe. But if it's in the scripture, I believed it.

For example, even in the past, whenever I have been a bit sick, I must ask the Lord, Lord Jesus, were you ever sick? I know that sickness is not always the result of sin. Sometimes it is. But you remember once there was a blind man.

And the disciples asked Jesus, is it because of his sin or his father's sin, John chapter 9. And Jesus said, no, not his sin, not his father's sin. But sometimes it is. Because when he healed the man who was lame in John 5, he told him afterwards, no, don't sin again because something worse may happen.

So that guy's sickness was due to sin. But in John chapter 9, the blind man's sickness was not due to sin. So we have to distinguish.

And then I saw in scripture, I want to show you this. It says in Matthew chapter 8 and verse 16, when evening came, they brought to Jesus many who were demon-possessed. And he cast out the spirits of the word and healed all who were ill.

This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet. He himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases or sicknesses. Now, that verse, Matthew 8, 17, is a quotation from Isaiah 53, verse 4. When we compare scripture with scripture, sometimes we discover some amazing truths.

That's what I discovered here. It says here, the Holy Spirit says that Jesus himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases. And that was fulfilled not on the cross.

No. This was three years before the cross when he took away the infirmities and diseases of these people mentioned in verse 16. He healed all who were ill.

And that fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that he took our infirmities and carried away our diseases. Some people say he took our sicknesses on the cross. There's not a single verse that says that.

He took our sins on the cross. And he took our curse on the cross. And he defeated Satan on the cross.

And our old man was crucified on the cross. But there's no verse that says he took our diseases on the cross. In fact, disease is a part of the body that we have, which is made of dust.

And the curse has gone away from our spirit. But I want you to know, the curse has not gone away from our body. That's why we perspire.

The Lord told Adam, part of the curse is you'll perspire. And no matter how holy you are, you will perspire when it's hot. And the greatest proof that the curse has not gone away from the body is that we die.

Death is a result of the curse on the body. But there's no curse on our spirit. Jesus has redeemed us from the curse.

But the curse from the body will go in the resurrection. Now, I'm mentioning this because there's a lot of imbalanced teaching in the world, where some people say you're never supposed to be sick. But even the people who say that get sick and die.

So don't be fooled by that. At the other extreme are people who say, when you're sick, you must never pray, because Jesus doesn't heal sickness. That's a lot of rubbish.

So our position has always been in between these two extremes. Even in many other areas, like speaking in tongues, or many other areas, we find that the truth is not at that extreme or this extreme. It's in between these two extremes.

And that's what we always seek, to walk that narrow way between the two extremes that people go to. And in this area of sickness also, it's like that. We will never be free from sickness on this earth.

But we must pray every time we're sick to be healed. And like if a child is sick, I've often said, if somebody asked me to pray for a child that's sick, I said, I will keep on praying for that child till it dies. When it dies, I'll

say, OK, it was not God's will to be healed.

Many children die, even believers' children die. Many believers have miscarriages. We accept that.

But we must pray against it, because sickness is not part of God's perfect will. So anything that's not part of God's perfect will, we pray against it. So this verse, Matthew 8, 17, which I quoted, if you remember, remember what it says here.

He took our infirmities and carried away our diseases, as Isaiah the prophet said. Now go back to Isaiah 53. And I want to show you something very interesting.

I've said it before, but for the benefit of many who may not have heard me before, Isaiah 53 and verse 4. Notice what it says here in verse 4. Surely our griefs He bore. What did we read in Matthew 8? Our sicknesses He bore. But here it says, our griefs.

And then I look at the margin of my Bible. And in the margin, it says, in the original Hebrew, it says sickness. But the translators did not dare to translate it as sickness.

Very interesting. Many times you find in the Bible, the translators have used their own wisdom. So in the margin, they say, the original says sickness, but we didn't feel it could be sickness.

So they translated it as griefs. And I'll tell you why they translated it as grief. Because the same word is used in verse 3. Jesus was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief.

And again in the margin, it says sickness. That's why they didn't want to translate it. Because those original translators said, Jesus couldn't possibly be sick.

So that must be a mistake. But the Holy Spirit says, Jesus was acquainted with sickness. When you say you're acquainted with a person, it means you know that person very well.

It's not a casual visitor. Jesus was acquainted with sickness. I believe it.

And it's been a tremendous comfort for me so that I don't live in an unrealistic world that my Savior experienced headaches, stomachaches, sickness, because he lived with a body that could die. It's like asking, do you think Jesus perspired when he was working as a carpenter? I don't know what you think. I believe he perspired like anything.

Because he was a hard worker. So if he was perspiring, perspiration is part of the curse on the body. There was no curse on his spirit.

But he died. Death is also part of the curse. So when it says here he was acquainted with sickness, I'm comforted by that.

And I say, Lord, why were you acquainted with sickness? And the answer is because he wanted to understand personally what other people go through when they are sick. Not know it theoretically. You know, God can have compassion on our weakness even without becoming a man.

But he could not have the feeling of our infirmities if he didn't become a man. This is one of the great truths, that Jesus came in the flesh. One of the things that people have fought against, fought against, fought against, and that's the reason they don't get victory over sin.

But not only that, it's the thing that brings comfort to a true disciple to know that my Savior came in my flesh like mine and experienced everything that I go through except sin. Everything else he experienced. When people whipped him, do you think he suffered pain? In my resurrection body, if somebody whips me, I will suffer no pain.

But Jesus suffered pain, did the blood flow? So he was exactly like us. The only thing missing in his life was sin. Teaching us one wonderful thing, that if we really seek to follow him and believe that he came like us and seek for the power of the Holy Spirit by which he lived, we can also overcome sin.

And this is the thing that helped me more than 40 years ago when God opened my eyes to this truth, that I need never be discouraged, no matter what happens. I need never lose my temper. It may take time to overcome it, but I can come to the place where I never, never lose my temper.

That's a hope. And the devil wants to rob us of that hope. No, no, no, you will always lose your temper.

You will always get discouraged. You'll never get victory. Those filthy thoughts will enslave you and enslave you till ever and ever.

That's a lie. And in the church we are called to expose the lie of the devil. And we expose it by saying that Jesus Christ, my savior, came in my flesh and experienced everything I go through and he never sinned.

The only thing I want to avoid in my life is sin. Anything that, I believe, discouragement and anger are sin. I believe sexually dirty thoughts are sin.

And Jesus never had them. He was tempted and he never had them. And you and I will be tempted.

But the wonderful truth is that we can be overcomers as we look to him. Looking unto Jesus, we run this race and in sickness too. To know that he was acquainted with sickness enabled me to understand why.

You know, very often we pray, Lord Jesus, heal me. And we believe he hears our prayer. And many of you have experienced this, that the healing doesn't come immediately.

Some of us have experienced sickness for a long time and we're not healed. I'll tell you, I prayed every single day of this week. I'm still not fully recovered.

Keep coughing and coughing and started with a cold. But I prayed, I even laid hands on my head and prayed. And I asked others to pray for me.

So what is it? Does Jesus answer our prayer immediately or not? I'll tell you something. Jesus seeks our eternal good, not our temporary good. That's why he allows some of you to lose your jobs.

Why should he allow that? Why does he allow us to go through certain difficulties in life which he could easily save us from? One, I'll tell you two reasons. One, it is to make us a little more like him, to detach us a little more from this world. And also, to enable us to have compassion for others who are suffering.

You can never, if you never experience sickness in your life, you'll never be able to sympathize with someone else who's sick. You can go and pray for that person, but you need to have a little experience of what he's going through. For example, when the Lord doesn't answer your prayer immediately, you pray and pray and pray and pray for something a number of days, nothing happens, you can understand what someone else is going through who's probably prayed for something for six months.

And something which God could have answered immediately, and he doesn't. But who at the end of it, you can still say, no, my Lord is faithful, I will not, like Job said, you know, even if he slays me, I will trust in him. What a verse that is.

Let me turn you to Book of Job and see something interesting that he said over there. Job 13 and verse 15, that's a great verse. For a man who had no Bible, no Holy Spirit, no fellowship, no meetings, for him to say something like this, even if he slays me, Job 13, 15, I will hope in him, I will trust him.

I want to ask you, my brother, sister, can you say that? Particularly when you're going through deep pain or suffering of some sort, you know that which God can relieve in a moment, and he doesn't. And you wonder why, and you say, well, I don't know the answer to that, I'm not God, I don't know the answer. But I know that even if he kills me, I will still die trusting in him.

See, that's what the martyrs have always said. See, the difference between John the Baptist, who was the greatest prophet in the Old Testament, and when he was in, he held on in faith until he was jailed by Herod. When he was jailed by Herod, do you know that John the Baptist began to lose his faith? Why did he lose his faith? Because God had protected him from all evil out there in the wilderness.

And here was an earthly king just locking him up in a jail, and why didn't the Lord release him? That's the question in John the Baptist's mind. So he sends some of his disciples to Jesus. You read in Matthew 11, they went to Jesus and said, are you really the Messiah? Or do we have to wait for the Messiah still to come? Who is asking this question? The man who heard the voice from heaven saying, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.

Imagine if you had heard a voice from heaven over Jesus, would you ever doubt that he's a Messiah? And not only he heard the voice from heaven, he saw the dove coming down and resting upon him. And at the end of it, he doubts it. Sometimes we think if I see Jesus once in my life, physically, I'll never doubt him again in my life.

Don't be so sure. Our flesh is so deceptive. So John the Baptist loses faith, but New Testament saints have been in jail for 15, 20 years and not lost faith.

You read of people like Richard Wurmbrand and others, they trusted the Lord till the end and some of them died in jail. How were they better than John the Baptist? I don't think they were greater than John the Baptist in their devotion to the Lord, but they had the Holy Spirit in them which John the Baptist did not have. To me, that is the greatest proof that the greatest prophet in the Old Testament did not have the Holy Spirit inside him.

And so he lost faith just because he was jailed and Jesus did not release him. But in the new covenant, those who are filled with the Holy Spirit, even if they are jailed for 50 years, say, Lord, we trust you. Think of these martyrs who went to the stake being burnt.

They would die singing songs or thrown to the lions. They never lost faith. And so these things encourage us tremendously.

What about us? Do you lose faith when some little prayer you prayed didn't get answered in one week or didn't get answered in six months? Take courage from these people who have stood true to the Lord for many years. See this other verse in Job chapter 23, verse 10. Job 23, verse 10.

It says, he knows the way that I take. The Living Bible paraphrase of that is, he knows every detail of what is happening to me. There are two very important verses in the book of Job which I just showed you.

Though he kills me, I'll trust him. And the other is this one in the Living Bible. He knows every detail of what is happening to me.

And Job said that when he had lost his children, lost his property, and was sick with sore boils, probably leprosy, and sitting there outside the gate. It's probably leprosy because he couldn't sit in his house. He had to sit outside the gate, scratching himself.

He says, he knows every detail of what is happening to me. Amazing that a man under, not even under the old covenant, who lived before Moses, could say that. It's a tremendous challenge to me.

Lord, would I be able to say that? If I lost all my children and lost all my property and money, and on top of that, I got leprosy, and I'm put outside where people don't wanna talk to me, and I sit there scratching myself and say, my Lord knows every detail of what is happening to me. How little it takes for us to question God, to doubt Him, to complain, when we have these great examples of men in the Bible who went through, even in the old covenant, who went through much more, and said they would trust Him. And the wonderful thing is in the new covenant, it's a step further than Job 23.10. Job 23.10 only says, He knows every detail of what is happening to me.

But Romans 8.28 says, He makes those details work for our good. That Job did not know. Job only said, God knows everything happening to me.

That itself is a tremendous comfort, to know that my Heavenly Father knows every detail of what is happening. But imagine the greater comfort it is when you realize that He's making those very things which appear to be harmful, to work for our good. Romans 8.28. We know, and it's a very important statement, it's not, don't start with God causes all things to work together for good.

That is what many people say, it's right. But you should be able to say, I know. That's how it begins.

I know it's a confession of faith. I know that God causes everything to work for good to those who love Him and who are called according to His purpose. And that purpose is mentioned in verse 29, that we might be conformed to the image of God's Son.

That is the good. The good is not that I get a better job or marry a better girl or boy or get more money. No, the good is the greatest good that God can ever do.

And that is, you see, this is the verse that teaches me, John, Romans 8.28 and 29, that when God talks about good, doing good to me, He's not talking about increasing my salary. He's not even talking about healing me. He's not talking about giving me a better house or many of you a better marriage partner, no.

He is talking about making us like Jesus Christ because God says, that is the greatest good that I can do to any human being. And when you come to know the Lord, you will agree with God. I agree with God completely today.

I say, Heavenly Father, the greatest good you can ever do to me is make me like Jesus Christ. Not give me a ministry. Ministry and all is secondary.

You're not gonna have any ministry in heaven. You don't get taken up with trying to be a preacher or an elder or ministry. These are all worldly pursuits.

If you're really a serious new covenant Christian, your one passion will be make me like Jesus. That is the greatest good that God Almighty can do to you. And I say to you, there are many things in the world that will distract you from it.

One of the biggest things is the pursuit of money. CFC was full of 10 or 12 people or maybe 20, 30 people in the early days. Very poor.

Most of them came walking by bus to the meeting. One or two by bicycle. That's how we started.

But look at our state today. How many cars there are in the parking lot? You think that has made us more spiritual? I'm not against it. There's nothing wrong in a higher salary.

Cost of living goes up to earn more. I'm not saying you'll become spiritual if you ride a bicycle or ride a scooter. But I say that wealth has a strange power to draw us away from God.

That's what I say. And if you're not careful, it will draw you away. As long as we live in the world, there'll be snakes.

But we must be careful. Wealth will come. We must be careful.

A snake cannot make you unspiritual. May bite you, maximum kill you physically. But wealth can destroy you.

The pursuit of it or sitting back and relaxing because I have so much. Whereas in the olden days, you need to pray, say, God, I need you. I'm just saying be careful because that has a tremendous power.

Jesus himself said, you cannot love God and money. And the great danger when we have more and more is to love money more and to pursue it. So we have to be careful.

The greatest good that God can do to you is not give you a better job or make you wealthy or more comfortable. God may do all of that, but it's to make you like Jesus Christ. And I want to urge you, my dear brothers and sisters, never, never lose sight of that.

When people treat you badly or you didn't get what you wanted or you lost something precious or you're suffering in a way that you can't understand and suffering is going on and on and on and on. Physical or emotional or mental or financial, whatever struggle, remember this verse. The greatest good that God can do to you is to make you like Jesus Christ.

And if you love him, see the promise in Romans 8, 28 is not for everybody. It says those who love God and are called according to his purpose. Just two things.

Lord Jesus, I love you more than anyone and anything on this earth. I love you more than my health. I love you more than my house, my wife, my husband, children, I love you more than anyone.

And I want to fulfill your purpose in life. Those who love God and who are called according to his purpose. In other words, those who say, the only thing I want to do on this earth is to fulfill God's will in my life.

I don't want to come to the end of my life and discover that something God planned for me I did not complete because I went running after something else. Oh God, save me from that. Because that will give me regret for all eternity.

I'll never be able to come back and do that which God wanted me to do. I'm very conscious of that. I want to encourage you, my brothers.

Please turn to Psalm 139. Psalm 139 speaks about before we were born. Verse 13, you formed my inward parts, you wove me in my mother's womb.

And when you, verse 16, you saw in my mother's womb, you saw me not yet fully formed. But while I was in that unfully formed state, unformed state, in your book that is in God's mind, whenever it speaks about God's book, it's God's mind. There was something written down in God's mind with my name.

All the days that were planned for me when there was not even one of them, that means I was not even born. Before my first earthly day, my entire life, not just generally, not just at 19 and a half, he must get converted. No, no, no, no, no.

The exact date. Every day, every day, where he should be, in my case, anyway, when he should leave the Navy, what he should do next, and what he should do next, where he should get frustrated, where people should reject him, and all types of things. It's all written down.

I want to be in that place. I don't want to be in some other place. If the Lord says, I'm supposed to be in one particular place where they'll call me a devil one day, I don't want to be in some other place where they call me a prophet.

I want to be in that place where they call me a devil. Do you want that? Do you want to be in the place where God wants you to be every single day, no matter whether it is suffering or pain or ridicule or sickness or rejection or people calling you bad names or misunderstanding you? Lord, if that is the place you have planned in your book for me, that's where I want to be. I don't want to be in a more comfortable place.

That's the wholehearted person who wants God's purpose for his life to be fulfilled. I hope you will. This is what we have preached.

This is not something new. We preached for more than 40 years, but it needs to be repeated. It needs to be repeated because I see that many are drifting.

Many who were once gripped are drifting, and I'm concerned that they are drifting. It's like a doctor who sees the patient is sinking. We've got to do something to restore him to health before he dies.

Isn't that what a good doctor will do? So what if it is the same medicine that we have given? We've got to keep on giving the same medicine because he's got to recover. And so I have no hesitation in giving the same medicine preaching the same message again and again if it will make the patient recover and take life seriously. Dear brothers and sisters, please believe there is a plan God has for your life, not just a general plan, but every single day, where you should be, where you should not be.

And make this your prayer, Lord. Every single day of my life, I want to be where you want me to be. And if you're passionate about it, I'll tell you something.

All hell and all the evil powers in the world will never be able to stop you from fulfilling God's will for your life every single day. And when you come to the end of your life, you'll be able to say with the Apostle Paul, I have finished my course. Do you want to say that at the end of your life? I want to say that.

I want to give you the example of Joseph. Even in the old covenant, God had a plan for Joseph's life and he gave him a little glimpse of it. Sometimes we don't get a glimpse of it, but I'll tell you why God gave Joseph a glimpse of it because he didn't have a Bible.

He didn't have the Holy Spirit. So when people didn't have the Bible and didn't have the Holy Spirit, God spoke to them in visions and dreams. But don't think that visions and dreams are superior to the scriptures.

There are many Christian groups where people get up and say, I had a vision, I had a dream. And that becomes like a competition. Somebody else says, I also had, I had two visions.

Somebody has, somebody says he saw one angel. Nobody says I saw two angels. We're not in that competition.

We believe that God's word, where God speaks to us through the Holy Spirit is superior to any vision or dream. Maybe I should show you that first. Please turn with me to Numbers in chapter 12.

Numbers chapter 12. You know, there was a time when Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses. Numbers 12.

They didn't call him an evil man or anything. They only criticized him saying in verse one, why did you marry a non-Jewish woman? It doesn't look like a criticism, but it is. Why did you marry a Kushite, a non-Jewish woman, one who's not a daughter of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Moses didn't reply.

It says in verse three, he was more humble than anybody on the face of the earth. The only other person about whom that's written is Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament, Moses was the most humble man on the face of the earth.

And suddenly, you know, the Lord heard it. You know that the Lord hears what you speak against his servants? And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, you come here, I wanna speak to you. Moses didn't defend himself.

The Lord defended him. The Lord came down and said, now listen to me, he said to them, to Miriam and Aaron, you guys who are criticizing Moses. I want you to hear something he told them.

If there is a prophet among you, prophet, that's a great thing to be a prophet in Israel. I will reveal myself to him in a vision or in a dream. But Moses is not like that.

He's not a prophet. He's more than a prophet. So I don't speak to him in visions and dreams.

I speak to him face to face, mouth to mouth. Not in dark sayings like visions and dreams when he's asleep. He sees me, middle of verse eight, he actually sees me.

I speak to him face to face. That is like a new covenant experience that Moses had. May God speaks to us not through visions and dreams, but in our heart, more clear than a vision and a dream.

I'll tell you when the Lord called me to leave my earthly job, where I was doing very well and earning a huge salary, on the 6th of May, 1964, I remember that date so clearly. And I remember where it was also, it was somewhere near Bangalore. I never knew then that I would be living here.

It was such a clear word to my heart, that I'll tell you honestly, if the Lord had spoken to me in a vision or a dream, I would have had a doubt. If in a vision, the Lord said to me, leave your job. Or in a dream, he said to me, leave your job.

I said, well, I'm not so sure. Is that the Lord or is it the devil coming as an angel of light? Because the devil can also come like an angel of light. How do I know? Who's telling me to leave my job? Is the devil telling me to leave my job and be stranded out there? Mess up my life, when I'm 24 years old.

But it was not a vision. It was not a dream. It was in my heart, as if I had spoken to the Lord face to face.

I was so sure that I could go to the naval base and hand in my resignation immediately. I didn't have to think about it. That's amazing.

When you really know the Lord speaking to you in your heart through the Holy Spirit, it is more clear than a vision or a dream. So I'm not excited when people say they had visions or dreams, because that is second level. It's what it says here.

The second level people, God says, I speak in visions and dreams. Yes, he does. But with Moses, I speak in a new covenant way.

He sees my face and I speak to him mouth to mouth. That's what we need, brothers and sisters. So in Genesis 37, we read of a young man called Joseph.

He hadn't come to Moses' level yet, but God spoke to him. It says in Genesis 37, verse five, God spoke to him in a dream and told him how two dreams he had which showed that his brothers and all would bow down to him one day. And he mentioned that to his parents.

I don't know whether it was wise to mention it, to his parents and his brothers. He probably should have kept it to himself because that provoked jealousy among his brothers. You know, sometimes when God says something to you, you're not supposed to tell others about it.

I remember about, I think it was about one month before we were thrown out of the Baptist church. We were thrown out of the Baptist church, Ian and I, in August 75. One month before that, in July 75, when I was away on a trip, the Lord spoke to me something so clearly.

It wasn't a vision, it wasn't a dream, but it was words and about one page. I wrote it down and at the end of it, the Lord said, don't tell anybody about this except your wife. So I've never told anybody till today.

And it was a clear preparation for what was gonna happen. I didn't know exactly what would happen or when, but it was a preparation for what was gonna happen, that I'd be out and that, I didn't know, then it was gonna be the birth of CFC. But it was such an encouragement that God spoke to me one month before that.

And I remember even before these religious folk took us to court on some silly reasons, months before that, the Lord spoke to me. I think when I was in Pondicherry or somewhere, I remember that because I wrote it down, warning me that something was gonna happen. And it sort of prepared me.

It's a wonderful thing, my brothers and sisters, to learn to listen to the voice of God. Don't look for visions and dreams. And I'll tell you the best way to learn to listen is get familiar with the Bible.

See, don't ask God to speak to you in your heart if you don't read what's written down in the Bible. I spent years soaking myself in the scriptures. And that's why I could hear God speaking in my heart.

And if you don't soak yourself in the scripture, don't expect God to speak to your heart. Then look for second rate level like dreams and maybe a message on Sunday morning or something like that. That's not the best.

It's good. But it's nothing to equal God speaking to your heart. Develop that habit.

So because Joseph heard this from God, he was sure God was gonna do something. And I believe that's what strengthened him. You know the story where he was rejected, sold into Egypt, and he conducted himself well.

When he was sold into the jail, he conducted himself well. And ultimately, even though it took 13 years, he saw these dreams at the age of 17. 13 years later, he became the second ruler in Egypt.

But in all those years, the thing that didn't, I'm sure what encouraged him, which enabled him to work in such a way that everywhere he went, when he was a slave, Potiphar said, the Lord is with him. When he was in jail, the chief jailer said, the Lord is with him. How did he have that? Because he had in his mind, God has shown me something.

It's a wonderful thing when you've seen what God has planned for you. Get familiar with the scriptures. Then all these external things won't disturb you.

And that's why finally, when his brothers came to him, they were starving, and they had to go to Joseph for food. And Joseph gave them plenty of food, and called his father and gave them the best part of Egypt to live in. How did he do all that good to these people who had done so much evil to him? Can you think of somebody who has done evil to you? I mean, imagine if a close relative of yours, a close friend of yours, betrayed you and sold you as a slave, and made you a miserable servant in somebody's house, and that you had to suffer, and then somebody accused you falsely there, and you were put in jail, in jail for five or 10 years.

Think of that. That's what Joseph went through. I don't think any of you have been through something as bad as that, when somebody did that to you.

And then one day you meet this person, because he wants a favor from you. I mean, God has blessed you in such a way that this man comes to you for a favor. How will you treat him? Will you first give him a lecture? Saying, you remember how you treated me? Now God is punishing you.

No, no, no, no. This old covenant Joseph, look how he treated him. See this wonderful, this is the Romans 8, 28 of the Old Testament.

Genesis 50, verse 20. Genesis 50 and verse 20, it's a great verse. You must always remember it.

I call it the Romans 8, 28 of the Old Testament. As for you, you meant evil against me. God meant it for good.

In order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. So you meant it for evil, but God meant it for good. He didn't have a verse of the Bible to say that.

He had seen in the dream. To him, that was the Bible. God had spoken to him.

And so these people did evil, but that evil itself, it's not that God ignored the evil. That itself would have been a great thing. He used the evil to bring good.

The evil was sell this fellow to Egypt. God used that. The evil was put him in jail.

God used that to help him to meet Pharaoh's butler. So the evil which they did was the very thing God used to bring good. It's like Calvary.

The cross of Calvary where Jesus died is the greatest evil that was ever done on the face of this earth. There is no sin greater than that, than the killing of the son of God. And the greatest good, the best thing that ever happened on the face of the earth was the death of Christ on Calvary.

What does that teach? The cross of Christ teaches us not only that our sins are forgiven, that the devil was defeated, but it teaches us that the greatest evil that the devil can do against the child of God, that very thing, God can turn into the greatest good for that person. Have you understood that message from the cross? Even if you feel your sickness has come from the devil, Job's sickness came from the devil. God allowed it.

Sometimes God allows it. Even if it came from the devil, the cross of Calvary was the devil's scheme, but it turned the tables on Satan and it became the greatest good. So never, never again complain against a person saying he did this to me, or he cheated me, or he harmed me.

Because he did this, my family's suffering. Because that person did this in the office, therefore I couldn't get my promotion. When will you become a true Christian? When will you become a true disciple of Jesus who can say, you meant evil for me.

I mean, if I just say you meant evil for me, but it did not harm me, that itself would be a great thing. But one step higher than that. You meant evil for me, but that very evil got turned into good.

We must have one or two experiences like that in our life. At least one or two. I've had a few experiences like that.

Where the evil that people did became the very thing that turned into something good. I mean, just the fact that I ignored some evil that somebody did, that itself is a victory. Or that you can forgive somebody for the evil that they did, that itself is a victory.

Or you say, well, I don't mind, I praise the Lord for that, that is a victory. But to experience where that evil itself is the means by which God accomplishes something for you good, which would not have happened if that fellow had not done that evil, that's a tremendous experience of walking in the footsteps of Jesus. It really is true.

And we've experienced that as a church as well. It's not just as individuals. You know, when you are an integral part of the church, I don't mean just a visitor who comes here, listens to messages and goes away.

There are a lot of people like that. They're not 100% committed to CFC. CFC is like a restaurant.

A good restaurant, it's the type of food you like. So you come regularly to the restaurant and the wonderful thing about the restaurant is there's no charges for the food. The food is free and you can come and eat and you get lunch as well.

And you say, well, this is a good place to go to. I'm not talking about such people. I'm talking about people who have committed themselves to this church, for whom this church and everything in this church is their family.

I can say that. My relatives who live in Bangalore are not closer to me than the people in this church. And I don't mean everyone in this church.

I'm not close to a lot of visitors in this church. I don't know them. A lot of people say they are CFC members, but I like visitors who are not committed.

But those who are really totally committed, I tell you honestly before God, they are closer to me than my family members. Without a doubt, this is my family. And I say, when you come into that type of relationship in a church, only a few people come like that, but when they do, their experience is what God uses to accomplish his purpose in the church.

So everything that you go through, if you're a committed member, is gonna bless the church. I believe that. I believe that with all my heart.

I want you to believe it. Sometimes we limit God by our unbelief. We should not limit God.

It says that Jesus could not do many mighty works in one place because of their unbelief. I never wanted to be said about me, the final day when I stand before the Lord, if the Lord says, you know, I wanted to do something through you over there. When that person did so much evil to you, I wanted to do something fantastic, but you did not believe me.

You got upset with that person. You got angry with that person, and you sat and thought a lot of evil about that person, and that means you didn't believe in me, so I could not accomplish something I wanted to do through you through that situation, and the Lord tells me this at the judgment seat of Christ. I say, oh, Lord, forgive me.

What shall I do now? The Lord says, there's nothing you can do about it now. You should have thought about it then. Is that gonna happen to you? I have many times thought about it.

I say, Lord, will you ever have to tell me at the judgment seat of Christ that one particular day when somebody did evil to me because of my wrong reaction to that person, you could not bring good out of that evil? Lord, let it never, never happen. Never, never, never. I wanna make full use of everything God gives.

It's like, you know, there are children, for example, who have rich parents who throw away the money that their parents give them because they have so much. You see rich people, children driving around in fancy cars here, and if they crash it, it doesn't matter, and they know they can get another car. They run over people on the road, and they know the father will somehow get them out of the jail and all that type of stuff.

There are rich people's children are spoiled. They throw away their money. Is it possible that many of us, because we are receiving so much spiritual wealth and understanding of God, when throwing away a lot of

the wealth God wants us to have? And that's one reason why I believe that anointed prophets are not rising up in our midst as they should.

See, the time has come when a younger generation should be getting up here, even in CFC, and speaking prophetically. People in their 40s should be speaking prophetically if you have been here at least 20 years. Definitely, you should be the ones who are bringing a prophetic message, not because you understood the theory and speak so much.

No, not even because you have ability to speak, but because you've turned every experience you went through in life into something profitable for the glory of God. Our ministry does not come merely by studying the Bible. It comes through experiencing, and one of the things we are going to experience is what Joseph experienced here, forgiving people who have hurt us.

Please turn with me to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 18. In Matthew 18, Jesus speaks a parable which we have looked at many times. Peter came and said to him, Lord, 1821, you see, Peter had heard Jesus speak about forgiveness, and I understand, I've read somewhere, that the Jewish rabbi said, you must forgive your brothers at least three times.

After that, you can do what you like, but three times you must forgive him. So Peter said, I'm going to be in the new covenant. He said, shall I forgive my brother seven times? And he thought Jesus would say, wow, Peter, you're really great.

You've understood the new covenant. But no, he said, what do you mean seven times? Try 70 times seven. And in another place, the question is, forgive your brother seven times in one day.

So 70 times seven in a day means 490 times a day. Can you imagine that? Have you had anyone hurt you even seven times a day? I don't think so. What does it mean that I must forgive a person 490 times? It is infinitely, seven is the perfect number in scripture.

Jesus was saying, you just keep on forgiving. Now, let me clarify something. There's a difference between forgiveness and fellowship.

And the clearest example of that is Jesus on the cross. I told you the worst sin anybody committed in the world was the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Whatever sin you feel other people have done against you, it's not worse than that.

So the worst sin that was committed against Jesus, he's hanging on the cross. He says, father, forgive them. Because they don't know what they're doing.

But they don't know what they're doing means they don't know how serious a crime it is to hurt the son of God. And a lot of people, if you're a son of God or a daughter of God, when people hurt you, they don't realize what a serious thing it is because Zechariah 2 verse five and eight says, he who touches you touches the apple of my eye. They don't realize that.

People don't realize that when they're hurting me, they're hurting the apple of God's eye. So father, forgive them. They don't know whom they're harming.

They're harming the apple of God's eye. They're poking their finger in God's eye when they hurt me. It's a great verse in Zechariah chapter two.

So if Jesus could say, forgive them for that, that teaches me that I can forgive people for anything that anybody ever does to me. Whatever it is, it has to be inferior to the crucifixion, definitely. But this is where a lot of super spiritual Christians make a mistake.

So what should you do? Go visit those people? No. Did Jesus go visiting the Pharisees' homes to show his love? I never see him going any time, except when he went to somebody's house to preach something there. But he never went to any Pharisees' house saying, hey, you know, I love you fellows, even though you call me the devil and all that.

That is stupidity. I don't try to be more spiritual than Jesus. I forgive them, but I say fellowship is another thing altogether.

There's a difference between forgiving people and having fellowship with them. I can honestly say before God today that I've forgiven every human being in the world who's ever done anything against me. That's the honest truth before God.

But I don't have fellowship with most of them. In fact, I don't even have fellowship with a lot of believers who are not interested in following Jesus. Fellowship is, those who have fellowship with the Father, walk in the light, we can have fellowship with them.

1 John 1 is very clear. Forgiveness I can give everybody. So that's very important for us to understand.

So here this man, Peter says, I'll forgive seven, and Jesus says, no, you must forgive 70 times seven. And then he tells the story of this king, Matthew 18, 23. And there was a slave who was brought to him who owed him a huge amount of money.

Let's say crores of rupees. And that man didn't have any money, so he fell down and said, please forgive me. And the king said, okay, forgiven.

And that man went out and found a fellow slave, you know the story, who owed him just a small amount, maybe 100 rupees or something. And he caught him by the throat. This man who had been forgiven crores.

He catches the other chap by the throat and says, I won't let you go. Take you to jail if you don't pay up the 100 rupees. And the king heard it and said, call him back.

He called the slave back. He said, you could not forgive that man 100 rupees when I forgave you crores. You go to prison.

And not only prison, I'll get the torturers to torture you till you pay up everything. What is the lesson? Verse 35, my heavenly father will do the same to you. Who is he speaking to? He's not speaking to the Pharisees.

Verse 21, he's speaking to Peter. Remember, he's telling Peter, Peter, my heavenly father will do this to you. What is that? Hand you over to the torturers.

Verse 34, if you don't forgive your brother from your heart. Please remember that. There are believers who are being tortured by demons today.

Because they haven't forgiven somebody. Make sure it doesn't happen to you. Of course, the best way to forgive is because Jesus forgave us.

The second best way is because you don't want to be tortured by the demons. Don't sink to the second best way. Lord, I want to forgive because you forgave me so much.

I may never have fellowship with him. I may never meet him for the rest of my life. I believe some people whom I've forgiven, I may never meet for the rest of my life.

That's okay. I may meet them only at the judgment seat of Christ. But I've forgiven them.

And the proof I've forgiven them from my heart is that I don't wish any evil for them. So what I do whenever I forgive somebody, I usually say, Lord, please bless them also and bless their children, let it go well with them. I don't want any evil to happen to them, just to make sure that I've forgiven them from my heart.

So that if one day I hear that it has gone well with them, I say, praise the Lord, I'm very happy it's gone well with you. But it will not go well with them in the day of judgment. No, because there's a verse in Romans chapter 12.

I'm trying to give you a balanced picture of this. Romans chapter 12, verse 19, it says, never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God. For it is written, vengeance is mine.

I will repay, says the Lord. Read that carefully. There are certain things which belong to God.

We're not supposed to touch them. Glory belongs to God, don't take that glory. Worship, that belongs to God.

Don't let anybody worship you. Vengeance, that also belongs to God. Never, never try to take revenge on anyone because that belongs to God.

It is as bad as getting people to worship you if you try to take vengeance on someone because God says, vengeance is mine. But that's not all. The Lord says, I will repay.

And you can't say to him, Lord, don't repay. Then you say, how did Jesus say, Father, forgive them? Let me explain to you again. Forgiveness, sorry, sin very often has two directions like the cross.

All sin is against God. If you have a bad thought, it's a sin against God. But if you slap somebody, then there's another realm to that, another dimension to that sin, horizontal to that man.

The vertical is always there. You slap somebody, you've sinned against God, but you've also sinned against that person. Now that person can only forgive that horizontal part.

You slap me, this horizontal part, I forgive you, Father, forgive him. But the vertical part, you can never be forgiven till you repent and go to God. So that's what we see at the cross.

Even though Jesus said, Father, forgive them, they don't know what they're doing. Do you know that in the day of judgment, all those people will be punished for crucifying Christ? Don't be surprised in that day and say, why are they being punished when Jesus said, Father, forgive them? As a man, Jesus could only forgive that horizontal part. Those who repented would be forgiven the vertical part.

So when somebody does harm to me, he has committed two sins, against God and against me. What he's done against me, I forgive him 100%. But that doesn't mean he'll get away with it.

God says, vengeance is mine, I will repay. And I can't say, Lord, don't repay him. I can say, Lord, I don't have anything against him, but I can't stop God's rule of judgment, no.

Then you understand why you see a verse like this. In 2 Timothy 4, you find how scripture is absolutely consistent. You turn with me to 2 Timothy 4 and verse 14.

2 Timothy 4.14, Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm, Paul says. The Lord will repay him according to his deeds. You say, hey, Paul, haven't you forgiven him? Oh, I forgive him immediately.

But that doesn't prevent the fact that the Lord will repay him. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Paul says, this guy who did me harm, whom I have forgiven 100%, but he will not escape the judgment of God. The Lord will repay him because I cannot fight against God and say, no, no, no, Lord, don't repay him.

Because then I'll be destroying the foundation of justice in this universe, I will not do that. Don't try to be super spiritual. Paul was not, and I am not.

It is a fact that those who have harmed you will suffer one day from God if they don't repent. We hope they repent, and we hope they will turn but turn to another verse, please. In Revelation six and verse nine and 10.

Revelation six, verse nine and 10. When the lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and because of the testimony which they maintained. And they cried out, saying, oh Lord, holy and true, won't you judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth? I'm sure these people have forgiven them for what they did.

But they were saying, what about you, Lord? Won't you avenge them? Won't you avenge our blood? So when you see the whole of scripture, I say, I leave God's judgment to himself. That's not my business. Don't be a busybody in God's affairs.

He's a judge, he will do his business. My duty is to forgive, forgive, forgive, no matter what people have done till the end of our life. And if somebody has forgiven you, but you have not repented of that before God, however much that gracious man has forgiven you, it does not mean that you will escape the judgment of God, unless you have repented and set it right.

How do you set it right? By going and asking forgiveness from that person, setting it right. Otherwise, even though that person says, I've forgiven you, you cannot escape the vengeance of God. That is very important to understand these principles.

Forgiveness is very, very important to your brothers and sisters, because very often when I pray for the sick, I ask them only one question. Have you forgiven everybody from your heart? Among all the 10,000 sins that a man can commit, I ask them only one. And I say, if you have forgiven everybody, at least one big blockage is removed that God can bless you.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, even though these are familiar truths, help us to take seriously when you remind us again of eternal truths that we are to live by every single day of our life.

So many here have heard this truth this day, Lord. I humbly pray not one of them will regret in the day of judgment that they ignored what they heard here today. Have mercy on everyone, we pray.

In Jesus' name, amen.

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