

Forgiving Others as God Has Forgiven Us

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[0 : 00] How difficult is it for you to forgive people? I'm talking about when somebody really hurts you, sins against you, intentionally.

How would you describe the way you go about forgiving? Is your forgiveness based on your emotions? Is it according to how you feel at the time toward that person? Or is your forgiveness based on a commitment to forgive regardless of how you really feel about it? I want you to think about this one. Is your forgiveness conditional or unconditional? And then does your forgiveness, does it include restoring the relationship?

Once they have sought your forgiveness, you tell them you've forgiven. Does your idea carry you to be reconciled? Or restore the relationship to where it was before the problem arose?

[1 : 23] We're going to answer those questions this morning as we look at how Paul describes forgiveness in Colossians chapter 3. Forgiving people is one of the ways that we are to live in this world as God's special people.

We've been looking at that the last couple of weeks in Colossians chapter 3, verses 12 through 14 in particular. We've been talking about how all of this showing compassion, being patient with people, bearing with people, and today forgiving people.

This all really falls under the umbrella of loving people. If we have the love of Christ within us, we'll be compelled by the Spirit of God who lives in us to live this way, to treat people this way.

Well, today we're going to spend all of our time looking at how we are to forgive others based on the way God has forgiven us as explained in Colossians chapter 3, verse 13, and a very similar verse in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 32.

I'm going to put both verses on the screen. Here's the first one. If one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other, as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

[2 : 50] And then Ephesians 4, verse 32. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

It's real clear, isn't it, that Paul's telling us that we should forgive others in the same way that God forgives us.

So what we need to do to start with is think about, look at what the Bible says about how God forgives us. Let's do that. First, God's forgiveness is gracious, but it's costly.

Let's look at what that means. God's forgiveness is gracious. That means it's undeserved. Grace is God's undeserved favor.

We have all sinned against God. We've disobeyed His commandments. We've not lived life the way that He's told us to, or we've lived life the opposite of how He's told us to.

[3 : 54] Well, the Bible says it's a penalty for sin. Sin is breaking God's commandments. The Bible says that the penalty for sin is death, and ultimately that is separation from God for all eternity in hell.

So, that's what we deserve. From God's perspective, and He's real clear in the Bible, we have sinned by disobeying Him, breaking His commandments.

And He has declared that the penalty for sin is death. So, God would be just. He would be right. He would be fair from His perspective, which is the ultimate and the right perspective.

God would be just and right and fair to just say, you've always wanted to live your way instead of my way. So, after we die, He just sort of says, well, you just continue on living life your way instead of my way.

And that's hell. Living apart from God. Now, God would be just in doing that. It'd be like sort of we reap what we've sown.

[5 : 07] But God didn't just sit back and let us reap what we've sown in this way. He didn't just sit back and let justice run its course. God chose to be gracious and provide a way for us to be forgiven of our sins and not have to be punished.

I want you to look at two of the verses, two verses that point out how God provided a way by grace, undeserved totally, for us to be forgiven. Look at Ephesians 2, 8.

For by grace you've been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing, it's the gift of God. And then in Romans 3. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by His grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Here's what we're trying to think about. How does God forgive? Well, God's forgiveness is gracious it is totally undeserved.

Keep that in mind. But it doesn't mean that God ignores our sin. It doesn't mean that God says, ah, it really doesn't matter, just let it go. No, God's forgiveness is very costly.

[6 : 24] God so loved people like us that He sent His Son into this world to pay the penalty for our sins through His death on the cross. Look at how John describes this.

In this is love. Not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

That word propitiation is never used outside of the Bible, is it? And a lot of translations translate it a different way. The NIV calls it atoning sacrifice.

Well, here's what it means. Jesus experienced the full wrath of God as He hung on the cross. Look at it. For our sins.

We've sinned against God. The penalty for sin is death. Ultimately, it's separation from God. As Jesus hung on the cross, God unleashed His just and righteous wrath against sin.

[7 : 27] And Jesus cried out, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? He was experiencing that wrath. He was experiencing God as the wrath giver, not His Father at that time.

That's why He cried out, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? A little bit later on from the cross, He cried out, It is finished. Which means He took the wrath fully.

He completely paid the penalty for our sins. It's over and done with. God graciously offers this costly forgiveness to all who will accept it on His terms.

That's the second thing we need to see about God's forgiveness. God's forgiveness is conditional. We must first repent of our sin and trust Jesus as our Savior and Lord.

If God's forgiveness is unconditional, it means everybody's safe. That's universalism. You don't believe that. You wouldn't be here today. The reason to be here today, if you believe everybody is saved because God's just a good guy and He just decides to say, don't worry about sin and rebellion and evil and wickedness, just let it go.

[8 : 43] No. God is gracious, but His forgiveness is costly. It costs the death of His Son. It is offered to us as a gift on the condition that we repent, turn from our sin and trust Jesus as our Savior and Lord.

Unfortunately, repentance is not always emphasized as it should be in explaining the gospel, but repentance is essential. I want you to note how Jesus began His public ministry.

In the first chapter of Mark, Mark says that Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God and saying the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel.

Paul gave a statement in Acts chapter 20. He was talking to the leaders of the church at Ephesus and he was explaining what he had been preaching throughout his ministry.

He explained how he had called people to look at it, repent and believe. Look at this from Acts chapter 20. Paul says, I have declared to both Jews and Greeks and as he wrote that, what he meant was to everybody under the sun.

[10 : 00] I have declared to both Jews and Greeks everywhere I've ever preached that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus. Salvation and forgiveness of sin are freely offered to all who will meet God's condition.

Repentance and faith. They go together like two sides of one coin. We must repent of our sin in order to be saved. I want you to look at how this is explained, the word repentance by Wayne Grudem.

A great definition, comprehensive definition that explains really what it is. Repentance is a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ.

The idea is when we hear the gospel, whether it's through preaching, somebody, through a personal conversation, read the Bible or whatever, when we understand who Jesus is and what He's done, how we can be saved, God works in us to give us the desire to repent of our sin like this. If you're a Christian right now, you have a desire to turn from sin, to renounce it, to want to live life as a follower, obedient follower of Jesus and not a rebel against God.

[11:43] That's a work of the Spirit of God. He gives us the ability, the desire to repent, turn from our sin, hate our sin, and then trust Jesus as our Lord and our Savior.

And I want us to understand that saving faith is an obeying faith. We love Jesus. We trust Jesus. We want to follow Him. We want to be like Him.

We want to please Him. It's like He died for us, so we want to live for Him. It's a way of expressing our gratitude and our love. So God's forgiveness, we're talking about we forgive like God forgives. God's forgiveness is conditional. It requires repentance as well as faith in Jesus. Now, the next aspect of God's forgiveness is very comforting.

And some of you, this may be something you just need to take and embrace and thank God for. Look at it. God's forgiveness includes a commitment that He will no longer hold our sins against us.

[12:54] He expresses this in several places in Scripture in terms of not remembering our sins. Look at it. When God forgives, He promises to remember our sins no more.

The book of Hebrews records this twice. Look at it. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more. And then the second quote is a word-for-word quote from Jeremiah 31, verse 34.

Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more. Now, let's think about what that means. If I tell you that I don't remember something, I don't remember it. And it's embarrassing sometimes you may have told me something maybe a few months ago.

Let's be honest, maybe a few weeks ago. And it comes back up and there's just some things I just don't remember. It's embarrassing.

[14:01] I hate it. But I don't. That never happens to God. God always remembers. He can't not know something past, present, or future.

So when the scripture says that God says I will remember no more, that means he chooses to forget, to lay it aside, leave it alone, and not bring it back up in our lives.

That's how God forgives you. If you are a Christian, God has forgiven you of your sin. You may have done something that is so terrible, awful, hurtful to someone, so embarrassing, humiliating, shaming, that you just have a hard time letting it go.

Well, I want you to understand God doesn't. He forgives. He leaves it in the past. You need to do that. If you have truly come to him in repentance, turned from that sin, leave it in the past.

Don't recall it, relive it, and don't carry on more guilt because of it. God forgives. He cleanses you.

[15:28] He sets you free from the guilt and the penalty for that sin. Let yourself be that way and listen to this. We'll look at it in more detail in a moment. You've got to do the same for other people.

But this is not the best part of forgiveness. Look at what's next. God's forgiveness results in his reconciling us to himself. When God forgives us, he restores us to a right relationship with himself. He makes us his children. That's what reconciliation's all about, restoring a right relationship. The Apostle John comforts us by stressing our relationship to God is a relationship between the father and children.

Look at it. See what kind of love the father has given to us that we should be called children of God and so we are.

When God saves us, forgives us, he draws us to himself. He makes us his children.

[16:37] Now, as Christians, children of God, we still sin, don't we? We still disobey. We still don't do everything we know to do to please God.

When that happens, it breaks our fellowship with God, but it does not destroy our relationship. God has promised in his word, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

God makes us his, we are eternally his. We can count on that, but when we sin, it does interrupt the closeness of our fellowship.

Sometimes it just shatters our fellowship when we sin and rebel against him. Here's what we need to understand. Even if you have rebelled against God, maybe you're in that condition right now, you can be forgiven and have that fellowship restored.

One of the most helpful verses of scripture in the whole Bible is 1 John chapter 1 verse 9. We all need to know that verse, be thankful for that verse.

[17 : 50] Look at it. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. as his children, we come to him in confession.

It means we agree with him about our sin. He carries with it the idea of repentance as well. We turn from it and when that happens, when we do that, God forgives, God cleanses us.

He gives us a fresh start. Now, genuine confession will include turning from our sin.

So what I want us to see here is that in all cases where we sin against God, our forgiveness is always conditional. We've got to confess it, agree with God about it.

We've got to repent, change your mind, grieve over it, hate it, turn from it. If you are separated from God right now by your sin, I want you to know that God desires to forgive you.

[19 : 02] No matter what has happened, if you're not a Christian, turn from your sin, change your mind about it. And if God's working in your heart, He'll give you the desire to do this.

He'll cause you to hate it, to not want to live that way. Put your faith in Jesus, that He paid the penalty for your sin when He died on the cross.

Call upon Him to save you now. If you are a Christian, but you're out of fellowship with God this moment, you don't have to go another moment living that way.

Confess your sin. Turn from it. God will forgive you now. He'll cleanse you now.

He'll draw you close to Himself now. He will give you a fresh start as you leave here today as His child living in close fellowship with Him.

[20 : 04] Now, in light of what we know about God's forgiveness, let's look at how we are supposed to forgive others. How are we to forgive? Number one, we are to forgive graciously just as God forgives.

Since God doesn't require that we be deserving in order for Him to forgive us, we cannot require that another person be deserving of our forgiveness.

That means we can't write anyone off with the attitude, they have hurt me so bad, the wounds are so deep, I just could never ever bring myself to forgive them.

if that's, if you're a Christian, you cannot think that way and be right with God. You can be wounded deeply, hurt terribly, and find it very, very difficult to even think about forgiving.

If you're a Christian and dwell by the Spirit of God, you can show grace. that person, you never say they're worthy.

[21 : 20] You don't pretend they're not what they are, haven't done what they did, but if they come seeking genuinely your forgiveness, show them grace.

Show them grace like God showed you. But like God's forgiveness, our forgiveness is not unconditional.

We're to forgive those who express repentance. This is probably the most misunderstood part of forgiveness, but it shouldn't be.

If we're to forgive, think about it, if we're to forgive as God forgives us, our forgiveness is not automatic. God's forgiveness is not automatic. God's forgiveness is dependent on a person repenting.

So our forgiveness is dependent on the person who has wronged us expressing repentance. Jesus taught the necessity of repentance in personal relationships in order forgiveness to be granted.

[22 : 32] I want you to look at Luke chapter 17. Luke 17. Jesus says, pay attention to yourselves. If your brother sins, rebuke him.

And if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in the day and turns to you seven times saying, I repent, you must forgive him.

Jesus emphasizes that they repent before you forgive. forgive. There's a similar passage in Matthew chapter 18.

And in Matthew 18, Jesus describes what a lot of people refer to as the way of church discipline.

But Jesus just basically said, if someone sins against you, go to him, point out the error of his way.

And if he'll listen, if he'll repent, if he'll seek to make amends, you've won your brother over, Jesus says. If he doesn't, take two or three with you.

[23 : 37] Try to get it worked out between the two or three of you and the offender. But if he says no, then you take the matter to the church and if he's still hard-hearted and refuses to deal properly with what the offense he's sinned against you about, Jesus said he put him out.

You look at him as a Gentile and a tax collector, literally is what he said, which means you just write him off because he's not repented.

He's not sought forgiveness. He's not sought reconciliation. Now, if you're going to go to sleep, don't go to sleep now. Don't just hear that and say, yes, there's some people that will not, they've wronged me and they don't care.

I hate their guts and he's just affirmed I can hate their guts. No. If you say, I said that, I'm going to look at you and say, you are a liar. Hear me clear because somebody's going to take this and say, I don't have to worry about it anymore.

You do. You can't just write someone off even if they don't repent. There is no license for Christians mistreating other people.

[25 : 01] I want you to look at how Paul describes how we must respond to people who have wronged us and the implication is and they don't care. They wronged us and meant to and they're not sorry.

Look at what Paul says. It's in Romans chapter 12, one of the great passages in all the scripture, Romans 12, the whole chapter about living a Christian life, living a life to please God.

Here's what he says. Repay no one evil for evil but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Beloved, never avenge yourselves but leave it to the wrath of God. For it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. To the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him.

If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. For by doing so, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.

[26 : 07] That's even towards your enemy, the one who doesn't care if they've hurt you. If someone wrongs us and refuses to repent, we are not obligated to forgive them and act as if everything is okay, act as if it doesn't matter.

We're not. But at the same time, we're not allowed to mistreat them. Even if they're unrepentant, we've got to be ready and willing to forgive them if at some point they do repent.

But until then, you don't have to pretend everything's okay because it's not. But what we do have to do is just trust God to deal with them.

This seems to be Paul's response to someone who wronged him and did not repent. I want you to look at this. The Apostle Paul writing to Timothy. He's about to be executed, Paul is.

The last letter, he knows it's coming. And in this letter, he says, Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm. The Lord will repay him according to his deeds.

[27 : 32] Does that sound like somebody who wronged Paul and was repentant? Obviously not. He did me great harm. The Lord will repay him according to his deeds.

And then he tells Timothy, beware of him yourself for he strongly opposed our message. Paul didn't think about Alexander the coppersmith and say, well, it'll be okay.

No. He's writing to Timothy and saying, this guy did me wrong. God's going to take care of him. Don't you trust him either.

You be aware of him. He is opposed to me, you, and the gospel. He's opposed to God and God's word, God's truth. So you watch out.

Now, before we move on, don't forget what we started out saying. If someone wrongs you and they do repent, they do seek forgiveness, you've got to forgive them.

[28 : 42] we're obligated to choose to forgive them regardless of how we feel about it. Now, let's look at the next way we must forgive as God forgives.

We're to forgive and no longer hold the person's sin or wrongdoing against them. Think about this. Forgiving someone does not mean that we'll be able to forget what happens.

us. Forgetting does not mean, or forgiving rather does not mean we will have warm feelings for someone, someone who hurt us, wronged us.

The Bible, in talking about Christian living, talking about everything, but in talking about Christian living, the Bible never tells us to pretend anything. There are some people who may have so hurt you, wounded you, sinned against you, that there is pain to just think about them.

You don't want to even look at them. But if they come to you and seek your forgiveness, as Christians, we are obligated to grant forgiveness.

[30 : 08] Forgiveness is a commitment. It's undeserved. It's hard, but it's what God calls us to.

Now, forgiveness is a commitment that we make that we will respond to someone like this. I will not bring up their wrongdoing to them again.

If you really forgive your spouse, this is where a lot of this comes up. If you really forgive your spouse, when you get mad or in the heat of an argument, you can't throw up what's already been forgiven and be right with God.

That's not playing fair. That's not how we as God's people can treat people. Forgiveness is a commitment that says I'm not going to dwell on, think about, keep on rehearsing what they did. I'm going to let it go. Forgiveness is a commitment that says I will not allow their wrongdoing to prevent us from being reconciled.

[31 : 31] And that's the next point. We are to forgive and be reconciled to the offender. Forgiving as God forgives does not allow us to forgive someone and then avoid them for the rest of our lives.

When we truly forgive as God forgives, we will seek to be reconciled to the one who wronged us. We will seek with God's help to have our relationship restored.

Now, there are some situations where reconciliation will not result in restored closeness. Let me give you one example and you can take it and apply it to other situations.

Suppose a man and woman, husband and wife, they go through a bitter divorce. One deeply wounded and wronged to the other one.

They divorce. They go their separate ways. They each remarry. Well, somewhere down the road, the one who was, who did the, who broke the heart, who did the wrong, gets convicted of it.

[32 : 39] They've sinned and they seek God's forgiveness and they go to their ex-spouse and admit their wrong and seek their forgiveness. forgiveness. They better not get back together as close as they were when they were married again.

They can be reconciled, but their relationship will not be restored. They're already married. Forgive, grant forgiveness, have no bitterness, but go your separate ways.

There may be some situations where you forgive. You let it go. You forgive as God forgives.

But the situation is such where it would not be healthy emotionally, spiritually, or even physically for the relationship to be restored to what it was before, the abuse.

for an example that took place. But as a general rule, when we forgive someone, our goal needs to be that our relationship with them is restored.

[33 : 56] It may take a lot of time. It may take a lot of prayer. It may take a lot of effort on our part. But full forgiveness includes reconciliation.

reconciliation. That's how God forgives. Now, quickly, when it comes to the subject of forgiving others, some people need to be reminded that it's not good or healthy to be a person who is easily offended.

It's not good or healthy for you to walk around and just expect people to hurt your feelings, to offend you.

The least little thing bothers you. In fact, if everywhere you go in life, if at church, in family gatherings, among your friends at work, if everywhere you go in life, you just feel like, I'm a victim. I'm always being wronged. Most likely, you are the problem. Here's an important verse for every single one of us, but especially if you walk around with this chip on your shoulder.

[35 : 11] Look at this. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly since love covers a multitude of sins. There's a lot of things that takes place between you and your spouse, you and your friend, you and people you work with, people you go to school with.

There's a lot of things that happen that sort of bother you, but you just need to let it go. Because it's really not a big deal. The person probably didn't even think about what they were saying or doing. Love covers a multitude of sins. I'm thankful I've lived in a home where my wife practices love covering a multitude of sins.

I'd have more scars on me than I have right now if she didn't. And I'm going to guess by the looks on some of y'all's face, you've experienced the same thing in your house.

We need that. It's healthy. But when we are wronged or sinned against in a serious way, we are called as God's people to forgive others just as God has forgiven us.

[36 : 25] Let's pray about it. Father, I pray for people in this room right now who do not have a relationship with you. People who are not Christians and they know it.

Help them to understand that you are a gracious and loving God and in spite of their sin, their rebellion, their indifference.

You sent Jesus into this world to die for them. While they were still sinners, Christ died for them, your word says. Call them to trust Jesus, to turn from their sin, to truly repent.

Call them to embrace Jesus as their Lord and Savior right now, I pray to your God. Father, if there are Christians in this room who, for whatever reason, there's sin in their life that has caused a disruption in their fellowship with you.

Dear God, make it clear to them that they must humble themselves, admit their sin, and turn from it in order to experience your forgiveness and a restoration to full fellowship.

[37 : 47] But help them, dear God, to know there's no better way to live, no better thing for them to do this morning than to do that very thing, to confess their sins, to forsake them, to draw close to you, to renew their commitment to Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

And Father, I pray for Christians in this room who are struggling to forgive someone in their life right now.

Father, help them to know that it very well may be true that they have been hurt deeply. But Lord, help them, give them the grace to be willing to forgive as you forgive.

Amen. And just in an attitude of prayer now, let's just listen to the Lord and respond to Him. If I could pray with you during this time, I would be happy to do that here at the front.

Amen. Lewis Thank you.