

ARE YOU SERIOUS
“*REALLY*: Why Should I Forgive?”
September 24, 2023

INTRO.: Why? How many times have you asked this question in your life? Two-year-olds ask it all the time. Over and over again. Students ask it when given an assignment. I asked it when being told there were certain required courses, I had to take to get my college degree. Courses that I have never used since I had the immense pleasure of taking them. You're in a job and the boss tells you that you need to do such and such. You're driving down the road and somebody turns into your lane abruptly without signaling. You calmly ask, “Why did you do that?” Aren't you glad what you say in the car isn't broadcast for everyone to hear?

ILLUS.: Several years ago, when we were living in the Poconos, I was called to report for jury duty during the Christmas season. As a pastor in a church, you can imagine this might be a very busy time. I arrive at the courtroom building and there are probably 300 people there. The person in charge tells the whole group that they will be choosing juries for 4 trials: 3 will last 2-3 days and one 3 weeks. As I sit there, I'm thinking I will be called to the 3 week one which is what happens. People then began to share their reasons why they couldn't possibly serve. Some are excused and some are not. One person gets up and states that they are the only pastor of a church, and this is an incredibly busy time of year. The judge says that he appreciates their dilemma but that it isn't a viable excuse (they still didn't get picked). Now I'm sure that I am going to get picked and it happens. I am one of the jurists and the trial lasts all of 3 weeks and I have to be there around 8 am to 5 pm. They give us a bit of a lunch break and I think we got reimbursed about \$7 per day. Do you think the question, “Why me?”, ever crossed my mind? Like every day! It was a trial that involved much information and testimony about concussions, which proved to be helpful a few years later. I am sure everyone here has wanted to ask, “Why” when it comes to certain things in our lives.

Two weeks ago, we began our series, **ARE YOU SERIOUS**, a study on what the Bible has to say about forgiveness. The first week was this idea of **INCONCEIVABLE**, that apart from God forgiveness doesn't make sense and we have no reason to forgive. Forgiveness is based in the character of God, for He is forgiving in His nature. This doesn't mean that sin is overlooked or just brushed aside. The source of forgiveness is Jesus Christ, for in and of ourselves we are unable to forgive. Finally, Jesus Christ is the pattern for forgiveness. We need to get to know God better if we are going to understand forgiveness. Last week we looked at **EXPLAIN**, that is, what forgiveness is. Forgiveness is God's idea, Costly, therefore not easy, and Possible through Christ. We also looked at what forgiveness is not. It is not Pretending it didn't happen, it is not sweeping it under the rug, it is not adding “But” (therefore excusing sin), and it is not continuing to allow abuse to continue. This brings us this thought, **REALLY?** answering the age-old question, **WHY**, that is, “Why should I forgive?”

Pastor,

“They don't deserve my forgiveness” (you're right)

“You don't know what they said or did.” (you're right)

“I can't possibly begin to forgive them.” (you're right)

Please remember that I am not saying the journey of forgiveness is easy. I remind you that last week I said that forgiveness is costly, therefore not easy. I also said that sometimes we need time to process the whole idea of forgiving that person. We may need help from a biblical counselor to work through the many layers if there are long term hurts and trauma. This morning I want us to look at the following three reasons for forgiveness:

FORGIVENESS OF GOD

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

FREEDOM FOR ME

FORGIVENESS OF GOD

In order for us to understand and appreciate the forgiveness of God we need to look at what the Bible has to say about sin. This is what has gotten in the way of a person having a personal relationship with God.

The following definitions (Old & New Testaments) are from Lawrence O. Richards in his book, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*. He does an excellent job going through the various words used for sin.

First of all, in the Old Testament, there are three major words:

The principal word for sin is *hātā'*, which means “to miss” the mark. This word group is used 580 times, typically speaks of missing the standard that God sets for man.

Violation of God's standards, by falling short of what is expected, is sin.

Hebrew word *pesa* (“rebellion,” “transgression”) indicates a revolt against the standard, and *āwōn* (“iniquity,” “guilt”) is a deviation from or a twisting of the standard

Hebrew word *hattā’* means both “sin” and “sin offering.” It speaks of both the fact of failure and the wonderful reality of a forgiveness provided by God through the sin offering that removes guilt.

King David, when confronted with his sin of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah, employs all three major Old Testament terms in identifying his sin in Psalm 51.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your unfailing love; according to Your great compassion blot out my transgressions (*pāša*). Wash away all my iniquity (*āwōn*) and cleanse me from my sin (*hattā’*). For I know my transgressions (*pāša*), and my sin (*hattā’*) is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned (*hātā*) and done what is evil (*ra*) in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful (*āwōn*) at birth, sinful (*hēt’*) from the time my mother conceived me. Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Cleanse (*hātā*) me with hyssop, and I will be clean: wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins (*hēt’*) and blot out all my iniquity (*āwōn*).

Sin is not following God’s clear standards, falling short of what God requires, a twisting and reinterpreting God’s standard, utter rebellion against a holy, righteous, and just God. This is not an “oops.” Not only that, sin is also our human nature. From Adam, when sin came into the world, the sin nature has passed down to every one of us.

Richards continues on with the New Testament words:

Two major word groups in the Greek language:

“*adikia*.” “wrongdoing,” “unrighteousness,” and “wickedness”. Its focus is on the concept of sin as conscious human action that causes visible harm to other persons in violation of the divine standard. The Hebrew word to which this Greek concept is most closely related is *āwōn*

Where the NIV and NASB read “sin,” however the Greek word is almost always *hamartia*. Words in this group incorporate the full range of meaning of all three basic Hebrew words, *hātā’*, *peša*, *āwōn*. Like them, *hamartia* assumes a divine standard or norm and portrays humanity as missing the mark. Yet sin is also seen in the NT as rebellion and conscious deviation from known right.

Conclusion for each one of us is that sin is a revolt against God: the Creator, the Almighty One, Totally Holy and Righteous, the One without sin, and the Judge! Every one of us is declared guilty of sin and rightfully under God’s judgment. You may say, “But my sin isn’t that bad. My sin isn’t like that person who killed someone. After all I don’t even sin that much.” Remember that sin can be my actions, thoughts, and attitudes. It also includes not doing what I should do.

As I was driving this week, I was listening to a preacher on the radio who was talking about this very idea when someone says, “I’m not a bad sinner.” He said, “Now let’s say you’re this great person, like Mother Teresa. Using the biblical definition of sin, you only sin 3 times a day (I doubt that’s true for any one of us). At the end of a year your sins total around 1,000 sins. Let’s also say you’re 40 years old and so your sins total around 40,000 sins.” Does God just let that go? How can He and still be holy, righteous, and just?

Now we turn from our sin to God’s forgiveness. I’m only going to look at a few verses. Let’s start with Colossians 2:13-15. I want us to read this in unison to let it settle in our hearts and minds.

Colossians 2:13-15 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

If we go nowhere else in Scripture these three verses should make us fall to our knees in worship and thankfulness. The Apostle Paul is writing to fellow believers, those who have come to faith in Jesus Christ, repenting of their sin and seeking God’s forgiveness through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

“when you were dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your sinful nature:” when you and I were absolutely, utterly helpless when it comes to rectifying our relationship with God because of our sinful actions and our sinful nature. This not *“mostly dead,”* but it is *“all dead.”* This is being 100% spiritually dead and without hope.

“God made you alive with Christ:” Where does all the credit go? Who makes spiritually dead people alive?

“He forgave us all our sins:” How many sins? Every single sin we have committed and will commit!!

“having canceled the written code, with its regulations that was against us and stood opposed to us;” This was a legal bond, a certificate of indebtedness (Dick Lucas). Could you imagine a book with all our sins listed. Every sinful thought, action, and attitude!

having canceled: “wiped away,” “blotted out,” “obliterated” Hallelujah!! “Whether or not there was a wax surface on many ancient bonds, this cancellation implies the total obliteration of any mark, ‘jot or tittle’, that remains against us. (Dick Lucas)

“And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them:” When the Roman government would defeat the enemy they would have a parade through the town with the prisoners of war coming behind to be publicly humiliated. How did this all happen?

“triumphing over them by the cross:” The very symbol of death is to the believer the symbol of life. The cross was not the end, but the beginning. This is what it cost for my forgiveness and your forgiveness.

The complete, total, and irreversible forgiveness of God gives me reason to forgive others.

Psalm 130:3–4 If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? **4** But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared.

Isaiah 1:18 “Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

Acts 13:38–39 “Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. **39** Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.

Romans 5:9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!

Romans 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

Why should you and I forgive? It is truly rooted in the forgiveness of God for all those who have come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. How can we not forgive? The second reason of why we should forgive is because of how it affects our:

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

Jesus gives a pattern for prayer in Matthew 6:9-15, which is referred to as the Lord’s prayer. It is a prayer that many have memorized but I wonder if we think as much as we should what it is actually saying. I would like us to read it together and add two more verses.

Matthew 6:9–15 (NKJV) — In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Forgive us how? As we forgive others! This passage is referring to believers! It can’t refer to losing our salvation for when one comes to Christ our sins have been forgiven past, present, and future. This refers to our fellowship with God. Unforgiveness affects my relationship with God.

When the believer sins, it cuts communication with God until that sin is confessed. This is what 1 John 1:9 is all about. It is not the petition of the unbeliever.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Craig L. Blomberg, “Our plea for continued forgiveness as believers, requesting the restoration of fellowship with God following the alienation that sin produces, is predicated on our having forgiven those who have sinned against us....”

John MacArthur, ““Believers should forgive as those who have received judicial forgiveness (cf. Eph 1:7; 1 Jn 2:1-2) from God. When the heart is filled with such forgiving spirit, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. **Forgive** (afihmi) means literally “to hurl away.”

1 John 2:1–2 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. **2** He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

John MacArthur, “An unforgiving spirit not only is inconsistent for one who has been totally forgiven by God, but also brings the chastening of God rather than His mercy.” (cf. Mt 18:21-35)

Last week we talked about how Peter asked Jesus how many times he had to forgive his brother. Peter threw out the number 7 thinking Jesus would be impressed since the normal Jewish tradition called for only three times. Jesus responds with 70 times 7, meaning an unlimited number of times. Jesus then goes on to illustrate this point with the following story.

Matthew 18:23–35 “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents (an unpayable amount) was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. **26** “The servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. “But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii (a very small amount: a hundred days’ wages). He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded. “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.’ “But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.”

Believers, of all people, have the motivation, reason, and power to forgive. I need to be reminded of the amazing forgiveness of God, of His unmerited favor, grace, and mercy in my life. None of us could stand before God on our own merit. Unforgiveness is incredibly divisive in the body of Christ. My fellowship with God will be hindered by my unwillingness to forgive others. I cannot forgive others on my own strength!!

The great commentator William Arnot told the following account to illustrate how believers are enabled to obey the command to forgive each other. After fording a river, a traveler in Burma discovered that his body was covered with small leeches, busily sucking his blood. His first impulse was to pull them off, but his servant warned against it, explaining that to do that would leave part of the leeches buried in the skin and cause serious infection. The native prepared a warm bath for the man and added certain herbs to the water that irritated but did not kill the leeches. One by one they voluntarily dropped off. “Each unforgiven injury rankling in the heart is like a leech sucking the life-blood,” Arnot goes on to explain. “Mere human determination to have done with it will not cast the evil thing away. You must bathe your whole being in God’s pardoning mercy; and those venomous creatures will instantly let go their hold.”

Why should I forgive? Because of the Forgiveness of God, because of how it affects my fellowship with God, and thirdly because it provides:

FREEDOM FOR ME

My lack of forgiveness puts me in my own prison. It can be manifested in bitterness, anger, and gossip. Sometimes the person who hurt us doesn’t even know it or isn’t affected by it at all. Yet, we stew on it, run it over and over in our mind, and it begins to affect other relationships.

It can even begin to affect our health: causing trouble sleeping, losing our appetite, our blood pressure, heart rate, and many other things.

Ephesians 4:31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

“get rid of:” Take away, remove (this is a command)

Word definitions from John MacArthur’s commentary:

“bitterness:” smoldering resentment, a brooding grudge-filled attitude

“rage, wrath:” wild rage, the passion of the moment

“anger:” internal smoldering, subtle & deep feeling

“brawling, clamor:” violent outburst, public outburst that reveals loss of control

“slander:” ongoing defamation of someone that rises from a bitter heart

“malice:” general term that is the root of all vices

These words all involve conflict with other people and are a poor testimony to the world. They break relationships, wreck our fellowship with others and with God.

INSTEAD:

Ephesians 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

“be:” present tense, command

“forgiving:” present tense participle (to forgive or show favor: has the root word “grace” in it)

“forgave:” past tense (accomplished fact for the believer)

There is also another thing that troubles me that happens fairly often. It is when someone else takes up another’s offense. The person who has been wronged has forgiven the one who wronged them, and then a friend takes up the cause, only at a much deeper level.

John 8:31–32 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

The truth of the gospel sets us free from the penalty and the power of sin. Through Jesus Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit there is power to forgive others. When I have a spirit of unforgiveness I put myself in prison, captive to all those emotions and reactions I have just mentioned. We need to live like free people!!

SO WHAT???

*Forgiveness Always Comes at A Cost

*Have I come to know Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, realizing the forgiveness of God?

*Am I in the prison of unforgiveness? If so, what are the steps I need to take?

*Take some time to think on (meditate) on the forgiveness of God as described in the Bible. Memorize some of those Scriptures.

*Look to God for the strength and power to forgive others, realizing I can’t do it without Him.