

The Christians Secret Life ■ Forgiving Others

by Tim Conway

This sermon delves into the concept of forgiveness as taught by Jesus in the Bible. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing the immense debt of sin we owe to God and how that should lead us to forgive others. The message highlights the need for faith in understanding the depth of our sin and the magnitude of God's forgiveness, leading to a transformed heart that is willing to forgive others as we have been forgiven.

Scripture: Matthew 6:14, Luke 17:3, Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13, Matthew 18:21

Topics: "Forgiveness", "Transformation of Heart"

Description

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Transcript

Matthew 6 is part of what's commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew chapter 6 verses 1 through 18 make up a section of this sermon given by the Lord Jesus Christ that deals with our life in secret. The word secret shows up here repeatedly.

If you look at Matthew chapter 6 verse 4, so that your giving may be in secret, your father who sees in secret. You go down to verse 6, and again you see it, shut the door and pray to your father who is in secret, your father who sees in secret. When you go to verse 18 you get the same thing, but by your father who is in secret, your father who sees in secret.

This is the secret, that hidden aspect of genuine Christianity. In fact, genuine Christianity is not primarily going to be discovered by what people do here. The church is often a place of hypocrisy.

Not always, and not in everybody. But if you really want to find out what's true about somebody's life, look at it in secret. Look at it when no one else is watching.

That will tell you if that Christianity is genuine or if it is not. So this is part 4, the Christian in secret part 4. This has to do with forgiveness. So in verse 9, we looked at this last week, this has to do with praying in secret.

When you go into the secret place, Jesus says, pray like this, 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 also have forgiven our debtors.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Now we dealt with that last week. We're going to deal with these next two verses today, verses 14 and 15.

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses. So, two points of emphasis right here at the beginning.

We're going to pray first. Father, I pray that as we're handling your word out of this Sermon on the Mount, words spoken by your Son and our Lord Jesus Christ, we desire that this word that is truth. Lord, we know that when we hear so much that comes at us from all around this world today, there's so many voices, so many talking heads, so much information.

We're being bombarded. And we know that a good deal of it is not true. We're constantly being bombarded with that which is error.

But we know this. We know that whatever may be true out there, whatever may be coming at us by the newscasters and by the social media, we know this. Your word is absolutely true.

And I pray, Lord, you'd help us right now to have our consciences, our minds gripped, steered, convicted by the very word of God which is truth. Lord, sanctify us by that truth. I ask in Christ's name, Amen.

So, you see that this whole section deals with secret. This is the context. When we find these two verses, For if you forgive others their trespasses, verse 14, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

You see, this is massively practical. Because one of the things that the Lord Jesus Christ wants to happen when we pray in secret and we pray like this. He wants us to be able to pray this.

Verse 14. Well, actually verse 12. Forgive us our debts as we also forgive or have forgiven our debtors.

And then in verse 14, He reiterates this. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father. Well, you see, you saw that this context is about our life in secret.

This is dealing with our prayer life in secret. One of the things that our Lord wants is for us wrestling in secret, in prayer, with what our hearts are towards others. When others have wronged us, He wants us doing inventory here.

This is what He's teaching His disciples. This is to be regular, constant, frequent in our private places of prayer. He wants us wrestling with these realities.

Now, just listen to this. Just reach in and pull a verse out of, say, the Galatian letter. I don't want you to turn there, but just listen to this.

The Apostle Paul is writing to the Galatian churches and he says this. If you bite and devour one another, watch out that you're not consumed. By one another.

Bite and devour. Do you know how many churches where it's almost accepted? In fact, we just heard this. We just heard about a pastor whose daughter lives here in Manchester and sometimes she attends a certain place and there's two ladies that like to have tea out in the parking lot afterwards and they like to talk.

It is very common in the church, very common, for there to be slanders and for there to be gossip. Lots of churches. Lots of churches wouldn't even deal with this.

Brethren, this is not the kind of thing that you want to have existing. Biting and devouring. And that causes division, it causes difficulty, it causes tension, it causes just a conflict.

Watch out that you're not consumed by one another. This is said. Paul's rebuking them because there's real carnality in this church.

Or how about this? Galatians again. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. Listen, these verses don't come out of a vacuum.

These are real people with real names. You know what, when it comes to forgiveness, this is massively practical. This is right where we live.

Or you get this verse. You talk about there's real names here. Paul, when he writes to the Philippian church, do you remember the two ladies that he calls out by name? Anybody know their names? Jodeas and Syntyche.

Listen to this. I entreat Jodea and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. And then he turns his attention to one of the leaders there.

Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement. I mean, you see, these are godly women and yet they fell in. Listen, this isn't just happened to the carnal, the backslidden, the false convert in the church.

This can happen to godly people who ran shoulder to shoulder with an apostle. And suddenly you run into some kind of conflict and they need help. He says, these women who labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers who name are in the book of life.

How would you help them? I mean, if you had to help two ladies that were at odds with each other in the church, how would you help them? Because that's exactly what Paul is calling upon this brother there. And you know what Jesus sees? He sees so much of this resolved in secret. He sees us going, because you see the context here.

You see that He says, verse 6, when you pray, go into your room, shut the door, pray to your Father who's in secret. And in verse 9 He says, And He's not looking for verbatim prayer here. He's basically giving us instruction on what should be in our prayers.

And one of the things that He sees in the prayers is this aspect of forgiveness. And here's the thing I want you to notice. The prayer, basically the structure of the things, the categories that He wants us to give attention to are in verses 9 and 10 and 11 and 12 and 13.

You see them there. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come.

You know what's amazing to me? How important is it to hallow God's name? That means to treat it with reverence, to sanctify it, to consecrate it, to treat it as extremely special. How important is that? You know as important as that is, you know what I find absolutely amazing? Why doesn't He return to that? I mean you notice He gets done and in verses 14 and 15 He goes back. He wasn't even dealing with this in verse 13.

He dealt with it in verse 12. And He gives us all these different things that ought to be categories that we give consideration to when we go into the secret place to pray and out of all the things to return to, He doesn't return to hallowing God's name. He doesn't return to God's will being done.

He doesn't even elaborate on the last thing He just spoke about. Leading us not into temptation but delivering us from evil. He reverts back.

He doubles back to verse 12 and He says I'm not done with that instruction unforgiving yet. I mean you think about that. Why do you come back to something? When you talk to people, why would you go mention something, talk about other things and then come back to that thing that you talked about before? Why would you do that in a conversation? You know why you do it.

You do it because you recognize you didn't say enough about it the first time. Right? You do it because you feel like maybe the people are not feeling the weightiness of this thing the way you want them to feel it. You go back to it because you really want them to sit up and take notice.

You go back to it because you feel like well maybe they didn't really catch what you just said. You really want to make sure they do catch what you just said. You know what? You go back to it when you realize this is a big problem among God's people.

These are the reasons you go back to it. You go back to it when you want emphasis. You go back to it when you realize this.

God is in dead earnest about this. Do you know what He's saying in verses 13 and 14? Do you see it there? Or 14 and 15 rather? If you forgive others their trespasses your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. If you do not forgive others their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Do you realize how... You know what Jesus is doing here? He's coming back to this because He recognized God throws people into hell for this. People who will not forgive other people don't get forgiven and that means they're damned in the end. He recognizes this is life and death.

He recognizes that this is critical. This is something to be really earnest about. Now, I want us to go back to where He first mentioned this.

Go back to verse 12. Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors. He makes four assumptions.

These jump out at me. First, forgive us our debts. He's assuming we have debts.

Now, that is an interesting word. You know, listen, Luke gives us this same verse and says this, forgive us our sins for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. You see how there He uses sin and a word that deals with debt.

Indebted. Isn't that interesting? This idea of debt that is another way to describe sin and He says, you have debts. I mean, because He's saying when you pray, you should be asking God to forgive you your debts.

You have them. Now, isn't that interesting? You know what He's saying? He's saying sin is like this. Every time you sin against God, you owe God something you can't pay.

And you need to be forgiven that debt. Because you know what hell is? Hell is where people are put whose debt has not been paid. You know, in this country, they used to throw debtors who couldn't pay into prison.

You know what hell is? Hell is a debtor's prison. And you will stay there until you pay the last penny. But you have nothing to pay with.

This is the issue. It's debt. And Jesus assumes we have debt.

And Jesus secondly assumes I can't pay it. That's why I'm asking for forgiveness. Because I don't have that kind of currency.

What am I going to pay with? What am I going to pay with? I mean, do you think if somebody committed a crime yesterday and they lied yesterday by not lying today, that makes that go away? Since when does that work in a human court of law? If a guy murdered yesterday and he doesn't murder today, does that make him not a murderer anymore? Does his not murdering today gloss over his murder yesterday? It doesn't make the crime go away. Time is not payment. God needs to be paid in a currency that's going to satisfy Him.

And I'll guarantee you this. He is the one that determines what currency that is. Because He's the one that's been wronged.

And He said there's only one coin that He accepts. And you can't produce it. When we ask for forgiveness, we're asking based on what Christ did.

What we saw there in Isaiah 53. Now look at another thing that's assumed. Our debtors.

Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors. In other words, people owe us. In other words, somebody has sinned against me.

And you know He assumes that. Listen. Going through life and having people sin against you, He knows that's part of life.

Why? Because we're in a world of sinners. We not only all sin against God, which we do, but we sin against each other. You will be sinned against.

That's what He recognizes here. He just assumes it. And then notice the last thing.

He doesn't just say we have these debtors. He says we also have forgiven our debtors. Luke, I already read it to you.

For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. Don't you like that? Don't you like how He puts words in our mouth? He just put words in all of our mouth. Jesus comes along and He says, we've forgiven our

debtors.

Just as we've forgiven them. That's how He wants us to pray. He wants you to be able to pray to God, I have forgiven my debtors.

But I ask this question, what if I haven't? What if you haven't? I mean, He just tells us to pray it. I mean, how can the Lord just tell us to say this? Shouldn't He find out first if it's true? He just assumes it. If we say it and it's not true, He told us to say it.

He told us to pray that way. But, you know what, if it's not true, what do you think He's doing here when He tells us pray that way? Well, obviously that's a good opportunity to examine yourself. Can I say this? Can I say this honestly? Listen, the Lord Jesus is not telling us to say something that's not true.

He's telling us to say something He assumes will be true. You know how He's teaching here? You know how He's helping us to feel the way to this? He's saying, say that! And He recognizes that when you say it, it produces self-reflection. Am I doing it? Am I really doing it? He wants me to say it because He obviously is expecting that this is going to be true of His followers.

But He also recognizes that if we hesitate to say it, then we better figure something out here. What's going on? What's wrong? I mean, we want to feel the full impact of this. And you know what? If you haven't felt the full impact of this, you know what He does? He doubles down on this.

He comes right back to this in verses 14 and 15. No lip service allowed. He really wants to hit this.

So, debt. Debt is something that I owe. I owe a payment.

You all know what debt is. You have a credit card. You make some kind of payment with it and now you're in debt.

You buy a house. You get a mortgage. You have a debt.

You buy a car on some kind of financing. You have a debt. The idea of debt, the idea of payment, this is gospel language.

We find this kind of language everywhere. Listen to this. This is the heart of the gospel.

In Matthew 5.26 it says you will be put into prison and truly I say to you you will never get out. I've already mentioned this, but you will never get out until you've paid. You see that? Paid the last penny.

Well, paid the last penny of what? Well, the debt that you owe. You see, this is the thing. Mankind sins.

We are all accruing debt and we're headed towards judgment day. There's only going to be one thing that's going to matter for you on judgment day. Has your debt been paid? Because if it hasn't, you're going to this prison until the last penny is paid and you don't have coins to pay with and it's forever.

But listen to this. Jesus says a certain money lender had two debtors. Again, He wants to tell us about how the kingdom is.

What's it like? Well, it's like a money lender who has two debtors. You see the picture here. We're debtors.

One owed 500 denarii the other 50. It doesn't really matter that we know what a denarii is necessarily. The idea is they both owed.

One may have owed more. One may have owed less. But you know what? It doesn't really matter if some guy over here is a murderer.

Some woman is a prostitute. It doesn't matter if you've lived a little bit more of a moral life than somebody else. That's not the issue.

What does that matter to you? If you can look over and say, their debt's 5,000. Mine's only 460. So what? You still don't have the money to pay that with.

It doesn't matter. You're in just as much trouble. And Jesus acknowledges somebody's debt may be lower.

Somebody's debt may be higher. Somebody may have sinned against God far more than somebody else. Somebody may have more years.

Somebody may have more light. There's all sorts of things that aggravate sin in Scripture. And believe me, if you sit under more light and sin against the light, you're more guilty.

But you know what? We can always find somebody that we're better than. We can always find somebody that has a greater debt with God than me. But what good does that do me to find it? It doesn't do me any good because I'm in trouble and there's this jail at the end.

And there's a debt I owe. And so what about their debt? I've got my own debt. And that is my problem.

And I'm headed to judgment day. And there is a God who offers a way of payment. But if you refuse that, listen, God did never, ever have to offer that.

The angels never got this. The angels that fell were never given this. You need to recognize that for God to extend a debt payer for mankind, that, don't take it for granted.

The angels didn't get it. Oh, they would love to have the opportunity of escape, but they don't have it. Can you imagine if you end up there on judgment day and you face God and you were given the opportunity to escape your debt and you scoffed at it and you mocked it and you just went on using Christ's name as a curse word and you despised.

Listen to this. 1 Corinthians 6:19 You're not your own. You were bought with a price.

You see, there's the issue. Listen to this. A certain money lender had two debtors.

One owed 500, the other 50, when they could not pay. Now that's important because it doesn't matter how much you owe, you can't pay. And so what happens is, Paul tells these Corinthians Christians get bought with a price.

In other words, somebody comes who can pay. It says this. Peter, knowing that you were ransomed, there it is, payment.

Ransom was paid. You get ransom from the feudal ways inherited from your forefathers. Not with perishable things.

Not silver and gold. That's not how anyone's paid. Catholicism is a lie.

The priests want your money. You can buy grandma out of purgatory. It's a lie.

Silver and gold doesn't do that. It's only one currency, the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. Now look, primarily from here on out, I want you to see the Lord's longest parable on this subject.

And I want you to go over to Matthew chapter 18. Matthew 18. Because remember what we're talking about.

We're talking about forgiving other people. Their debts against us. That's the issue at hand here.

So we've got a teaching here. Same subject. The very same thing that Jesus is dealing with in Matthew 6, 14 and 15 that we just looked at.

He deals with here in Matthew chapter 18 verse 21. Now I want to dive in at verse 23. Matthew 18.

23. Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared. Now get this.

The kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven. What is that all about? Well, there's a king.

Kingdoms mean king or a queen. In this case, it's a king. This is the king's dominion.

This is what the kingdom of God is like. This is what the kingdom of heaven is like. It's just like this.

It can be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts. Now notice that. There's accounts.

When we think of debt, there is accounts. We typically, if we have debt with somebody, we owe them money. We take money from our account, we put it in their account.

That's how this takes place. He's going to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed.

Okay, you see the debt. So you have a king, and he has a servant. This first servant owes the king 10,000 talents.

Now, my Greek lexicon basically says this. 10,000 talents is equal to 6,000 drachmas. I know you don't know what that is, or 6,000 denarii to the Tyrian talent.

In other words, 6,000 denarii equal one Tyrian talent. Now, day labor would need to work 60 million days to pay that off. We're talking about literally 165,000 years of non-stop labor, day labor, to pay off this debt.

As a child, I would have a dream. It might not seem very terrifying, but I'd wake up terrified. And I remember this dream, and it was like I was out in the dark, maybe in space, the blackness of space, and there was a wall.

It was maybe steel, but it was impenetrable, and it was, I don't even know how thick. And I just, in the dream, it was like I had to get past it. I had to get through it.

And it was just impossible. And I'd wake up with the hopelessness. Listen.

And since, verse 25, and since he could not pay. It's like that wall in my dream. I couldn't get past it.

It was impossible. He couldn't pay. See, this is the issue.

If you end up on judgment day before God, and your sins are brought out, hell is a place that just screams, you cannot pay. You cannot pay. You have nothing to pay with.

And so, As Spurgeon said, eternity is written over everything. You can't pay, and you never will. So the servant, notice verse 26, the servant fell on his knees.

Now that's a good posture to deal with the Lord. Fell on his knees, imploring him, and he's imploring the right person. Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.

Now that is a foolish thought, and you know what? So many men are like that. They think they'll pay. I'm going to figure out how to pay this debt.

And typically it's through religion. A lot of people come to church. You know, there are people that sit in seats in the church building because they think somehow they're paying God.

Somehow they're undoing the debt they owe by they perceive going to church to be a good thing, and so that good thing offsets, because it's kind of a scale thing. You put the good in one side, and you put the bad in the other side, and you're hoping in the end. No, no, no.

What you have to recognize is the bad already has produced a debt that you can't pay. And no amount of good is going to undo that. Because you know what? Even if you did produce good, what Jesus said, you haven't done anything more than was expected of you.

That's what was expected. But you know the problem with that is the Bible says there's none good. In our lost place, we don't produce good.

Even the good we do, Isaiah says it's filthy rags. Why? Because even when you help a little old lady across the street, if you don't do it because you love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, if you love your own reputation, or you love grandma, see the problem there is we're not doing it in the purest sense. It says out of pity, now remember this, because I'll tell you, remember what this is? The kingdom of heaven can be likened to this.

Oh, we have a king who has pity. See, that's the good news. You want to remember that.

He had pity for him. The master of that servant released him. He forgave him the debt.

I mean, that's it. Have you ever heard when Ben-Hadad, he was the king of Syria, and you remember one time he was defeated by the king of Israel, and they were trapped, and somebody said to the king, well, hey, you know what? We've heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings. And so they put on sackcloth, and they went, and I think they even put, didn't they put ropes around their neck? And they went to the king, that's right, you know what? Israel and Judah, they were known for having merciful kings.

But you know what? The king of heaven, he's known for his mercy. And that's what we have here. Notice verse 28.

When the same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. Now listen, this debt here, that's owed this servant by his fellow servant is six hundred thousand times smaller debt than what he himself owed to the king. Six hundred thousand times smaller.

It'd be like if this guy owed the king six million pounds, and the king forgave it. But his fellow servant owes him ten pounds, and he won't forgive it. That's the picture here.

Now, it says his fellow servant, when the same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him one hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him saying, pay what you owe me. You see the language again. There's debt here, pay what you owe me.

Jesus doesn't deny that others owe us. That's a thing. We do.

We wrong each other. That's just a reality. People wrong you.

If you come and tell me somebody wronged me, I don't doubt that. I'm not going to tell you, well that's a figment of your imagination. Sometimes it is.

Sometimes we have hypersensitive people that just need to get some thicker skin. But the reality is, people do wrong each other. People cut you off in their car, I know they do.

People do mean things to each other. People steal from each other. I mean, yeah, that's part of life.

Jesus doesn't deny it. Verse 29, so his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, have patience with me and I will pay you. Sound familiar? These are the very words that this guy uttered to the king.

And now his fellow servant is asking him for the same thing. He's basically saying the same words. Have patience and I will pay.

That's what he said to the king. Verse 30, he refused and went and put him in prison until his fellow servant should pay the debt. Verse 31, his fellow servants saw what had taken place and they were greatly distressed.

They went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Here's the king. Then, the king, his master, summoned him and said to him, you wicked servant, and that's right.

I'll tell you this, if you go to God to be forgiven and you won't forgive others, that is the height of wickedness. I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. I mean, every one of us in this room, we feel the justice of what he's saying here.

We're all appalled by the conduct of this wicked servant. The problem is he's speaking about us. And the thing is we don't tend to feel it so much when it's actually us that's in this place.

We'll deal with that a little more in a second. But, he says, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you? And you see, the thing is when we hear this story, we don't like the wicked servant.

We're offended with the way that he's treated his fellow servant. I mean, you know what you say? Hey, he forgave you 60 million days of labor? And this guy owed you 600,000 times smaller debt? I mean, sounds to me like you could afford to forgive this guy. Well, that would be exactly right.

But you know what? This is the great double standard. And if you think... See, we can be appalled by this, but the reason he's telling this story is because this touches us right where we live. This is us.

This is you and me. It's the great double standard. And I'll tell you, men are told, you just think with me here.

This has to do with man's God complex. You say, what do you mean? I mean just this. Man thinks he's most important.

And you know what? Do you know what the God complex does? See, that was the temptation in the beginning. Eat that fruit, you'll be like God. Yep, I'm going to eat the fruit, I want to be like God.

And we still want to be like God. We want to be worshipped like God. And you know what our basic mindset is? My sins against others are very small.

Because you see, basically mankind runs around saying, I know I'm not perfect, but I'm a pretty good guy. Basically good at heart. You know what somebody's saying when they say that? I don't owe God hardly anything.

But you touch me, well see I'm God. Little g. You touch me, that's a big crime. You see the real issue here is, we don't really believe that we owe God 10,000 talents.

We think what we've done, it's small. Not a big deal. If somebody touches us, that's a big deal.

See, we've inverted this thing. It's a great double standard here. We don't even recognize in our God complex this double standard of self deification.

And you know what happens? You take two gods and you put them in the same room, then you've got trouble. Because you're like me and I'm like you. And this is really problematic.

Have you ever noticed how it's very easy to forget when you wrong other people. It's very easy when you sin against God to think well, it's hardly sin at all. Doesn't the proverb say, there's a way that seems right to man.

See, we always think we're right in our own eyes. We can always justify what we do. We always lighten it.

You ask somebody for an account of something, they can always put a spin on it that makes them look pretty good. And you know what? We're adept at that. That's our nature to do that.

But oh, somebody sins against us. Now that's, that debt is big! You insulted me! The God! Me! That's the issue. And when you get these two gods in the room together, both demanding to be worshipped, then there's trouble.

And everybody's keeping score. You know how long people keep score in this life? I mean, isn't it amazing? People can hardly even remember how they've sinned against God. They didn't even think about the 10,000 talents.

But somebody can wrong you and you'll remember it for years. I mean, Ruby and I, what was it? Oh, there's a movie about a man that was saved in Zambia. Well, he was in Zambia.

He moved to South Africa and he got converted. And in that movie they talk about the Zulus and how they could basically keep grudges. Their different tribes could keep grudges for generations.

That's how men are. We have a famous family in the U.S., you Americans, Hatfield and McCoys. Right? You get these families.

They were real families. You get these people at odds with each other for generations. Sometimes they even start to forget why they hate each other.

They just hate each other. But isn't it amazing? Nobody stops in their tracks and they even think about what they do to God. It's like, well, we're pretty good people.

Everybody keeping score in this life. And notice this. The anger of the one that's watching all this is ready to throw us gods into prison until we pay it all.

Verse 34, in anger his master delivered him to the jailers until he should pay all his debt. He says, so also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you if you do not forgive your brother from your heart. Now, listen to this.

I've told you Luke's account. I've told you Matthew's account. But listen to Mark's account of this.

Whenever you stand praying, forgive if you have anything against anyone. You talk about absolute. You see, sometimes we can kind of categorize.

I can forgive these people over here, but not... You know what? You don't know what they did to me. No, no, no. Jesus does.

And He knows what they did to you. You say, I was molested. I was this.

I was that. You don't know what my husband... No, I don't know. But He does.

And He says this. If you don't forgive everything that anyone has done. Now, listen.

Hear me. It doesn't mean that it might not be a battle or difficult. Listen, so much of the Christian life is not that you perfectly accomplish all these things.

So much of the Christian life is that you're trusting Him. And you're willing to take this and confess it. Lord, I feel bitterness towards this person and I confess it.

And you lay it on that altar and you want Him to kill it. You see, the problem is when people they don't want to surrender that bitterness. Just like that chocolate morsel in their mouth.

They just want to taste on that and they just want to roll it in their mouth and they want to savor that bitterness. And they won't abandon it. And I've heard it.

People say, no. What my stepfather did to me I will never forgive him. Period.

See, in hell that's basically what Scripture is teaching here. Listen to this. If you have anything against anyone whenever you stand praying, forgive if you have anything against anyone so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses. Now you see, this teaching makes us uncomfortable. Why? Because anybody that knows their Bible halfway well has issues with this.

We say, well we're saved by grace through faith. What is this? I mean, what's happening here? Many can't hear these words. This feels so wrong.

I mean, you look at the order of things. What's the order of things? This is one of these if-then type clauses. If this happens, then this happens.

Anybody troubled by if you forgive, then God forgives? Anybody troubled by that order? Anyone uncomfortable? I mean, in fact, think about the parable. Just think about the parable that Jesus just told that we looked at in Matthew 18. You know what it sounds like it's saying? We've got a guy over here.

He goes to God. He asks for forgiveness. Forgiveness is granted.

Then he doesn't forgive. Then the king unforgives him. Anybody uncomfortable with that? But see, this is the way Jesus teaches.

I mean, listen. This is what he is saying. And the thing is this.

If you and I, I mean, I would just ask you all this question. If you and I, based on the doctrine we have of how to be saved, the doctrine of salvation, would you teach unforgiveness this way? Would you do this? Would you say what he says? Or would you be so afraid that you were going to cause people to have a wrong idea? You see, Jesus doesn't flinch at teaching like this. He just... I mean, what do we call it when you have to do something in order to be forgiven? Works.

Anybody saved by works? So, was Jesus what? Wrong? No? I mean, doesn't Jesus know how people are saved? Lord, why would you teach like this? Don't you know how wrong that sounds to our by grace through faith you've been saved ears? Don't you know how uncomfortable that makes us feel? Well, I mean, I'm not saved by works. And you know what? That's absolutely correct. I am not.

And the Bible teaches we are saved by grace through faith. So, how do I explain this? First, just this way. Human responsibility is often presented to us this way in Scripture.

What I mean is this. Some passages of Scripture show us what God does. Some passages of Scripture show us what our responsibility is.

You say, what do you mean? Just this. Scripture says, draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Does it not teach that? It puts the initiative upon you.

You draw near. If you draw near, it's one of these conditional statements. If you do this, God will do this.

But does the Bible also tell us that no one can come unto Christ unless the Father draws us? You see, there are texts that say God has to initiate. But then there are texts that are not meant to show us what God's doing behind the scenes so much as they're meant to tell you what your responsibility is. Sometimes you get them joined together in the same place.

How about Philippians 2? We are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Why? Because God is working in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. Now listen, this matter of forgiveness is also inverted

in other places.

For instance, be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgive one another as God and Christ forgave you. Now see, we feel more comfortable with that order, right? And yet Jesus has no problem reversing it. And you know, why doesn't He? Well, because of this.

Listen, our theology, we know that parables are meant to teach a basic teaching and you don't want to press them, squeeze them too tightly or else you'll end up erroneous. What Jesus is basically teaching is what He says everywhere about forgiveness. He says this, You may have called out to the Lord to forgive you.

You may continue to ask Him that. But what He's basically saying is this, there is something very wrong with you if you're not able to forgive others. Everything.

Everyone and everything. Because what it really shows is that there is something vital lacking to your Christianity. It shows it's something that's not there.

And listen, to forgive other people, you desperately, desperately need the Lord's help. Brethren, I will say this, this matter of forgiveness is indeed a matter of faith. You say, what do you mean? It's not works.

He's not giving us some works formula here. This is really faith. You say, what do you mean? Just this.

Think about this verse. From that parable, one was brought to him who owed him 10,000 talents. You know, I just did some quick numbers based on day wages.

Was what, a denarius per day? Looking at your minimum wage here in the UK, basically he owed 4.3 billion pounds. Now here's the thing. We're dealing with faith here.

Because the issue is really this. Do you believe what scripture says? Do you know what Jesus said? He said, those people who are well, they won't come to me. They don't need a doctor.

People that are sick, they need a doctor. Let's put that in accounting terms. Let's put that in debt terms.

You know what he's really saying? He's saying those that recognize they owe God 10,000 talents, they're in the right place to come get their debt forgiven. Those who are well, those who don't think they really have a debt, those who think they've been basically good people, you know what? You don't have any problem choking people when they want to do some wicked thing to you or do some bad thing. Because your thinking isn't right.

Your faith is not right. You're not believing the right thing. I'll tell you this.

If once a person really recognizes that they have this kind of debt, are you truly a believer? Do you believe what scripture says about sin? Man imagines he's good. Well, I'm a sinner but I'm not that bad. That man is saying that his debt is just basically relatively small.

I would just ask you this. Do you have faith to really believe what scripture says about your sin debt? Do you really know how big it is? Because I tell you, people who recognize how great it is, when they recognize it's astronomical, when they recognize you're getting into 60 billion days to pay this off, you're getting into numbers that are so big that you just recognize you fall down on your knees. Do you recognize this? If a man came up before a king, you can imagine if I was up here on a throne and I'm a king and

somebody walks down the red carpet to the throne and he owes the king and the king's going to put him in jail and he knows it and he knows that's the just thing and he comes up and he has to say, King, I know.

I know I owe you. Lord, I have lied. I lived 25 years of just constant lies.

And I know the debt. And Lord, in your word you say my righteousness were filthy rags and I know that's true because I know even the good things I did, I exchanged you for the broken cisterns that couldn't hold water. I know you weren't in my thoughts.

I know I redefined you. I made you into a God that smiled at me in all my sin. I know I did not think on you.

I know that there's none good and I wasn't good. And when you, you basically are looking and you think back over the years, just think about your selfishness. Think about the times you've done wicked things to others.

Think about how you've dishonored your parents at different times. Think about how you've created idols out of things. You've thought more about money.

You've thought more about jobs. You've thought more about sex. You've thought more about drugs.

You've thought more about alcohol. You were given to things. You were driven by things.

You despised Christ. His name was a foul word in your mouth. You think about all the times.

Think about how you've coveted. Think about the greed. Think about how you've not loved other people.

Not done unto them what you would want done unto you. How you've just been selfish, self-absorbed, self-righteous repeatedly. Think about the evil that's gone through your mind.

Just laziness. Absorbed with TV. Absorbed with all sorts of stuff.

Just thinking about yourself. Thinking about pleasure. And see as you bow down before that king and you begin to recognize.

You begin to take inventory. You seriously think. God says, consider your ways.

And He says this, mark this then you who forget God, lest I tear you apart. Scripture speaks that way. Think about how often you forgot God.

You know what Jesus says is going to happen on judgment day? He says, bring those people here that didn't want me as Lord and slaughter them before me. Think about the times you didn't want the Lord to be Lord. You wanted to do it your way.

You wanted your thing. The times you've despised God's commandments. The things you've laughed at.

The evil things you thought were funny. Think about the jealousy. Think about the envy.

Think about the bitterness. Think about what you've stolen. Think about how you've stolen people's good names through your gossip and your slander.

And see as you're on your face before this king and you're recognizing, Lord I owe so much. I can't possibly pay this. He says, Jesus, your sin, not in part, but the whole, it's nailed to the cross.

You're free. Go. If you can turn around and lay your fingers around the throat of anyone else, you don't really believe any of that.

See this is really a matter of faith, not works. Do you really believe that you're that sick and you're that far in debt? Because you are. And Scripture says you are.

And Scripture says there's no one that understands. There's no one that seeks God. None have done good.

Not one. There's none good. And see, if you perceive you're good, it's because you're not believing what Scripture says.

I know we try to do some things that aren't overtly as bad as other things. I know we might pour a glass of milk for our child. You say, seriously? Preacher, you're telling me that's bad? I'm telling you this, that the Scripture basically describes man as every, every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continuously.

Man, even at the best, God rejects it because it's selfish, it's self-serving. It may be because you love your child, but it's not because you love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. And in the end, that's going to be the measure.

In the end, you're going to be measured against Christ, who the Father said, I'm well pleased. When you come and you bow down before the King, glance at the one who sits beside the King on that throne, and you look at Him and you look at His perfections and measure yourself by it, because I tell you how much ever you fall short of that image, that's how much debt you're in. And you know what? If you jump up forgiven and you recognize He has forgiven me 60 million days I couldn't pay.

And listen, the true debt is infinite. It's not 60 million days. You owe more.

You owe a debt you can never pay. No matter how many days you work, you can't pay it. And if you recognize you are set free, nobody who experiences that release and that joy and that delight and that salvation and that forgiveness of debt will ever go put their hands around the neck of their fellow servant.

And you just remember that. That's what it said in the parable. A fellow servant.

You can look at them and you can recognize, they're my fellow servant. They're just like me. We're made of the same stuff.

I can forgive them. Why? Because I know how they are. They might be having a bad day.

They may be ignorant. Jesus said, forgive them. There's forgiveness.

They know not what they do. I can look at people in this world and I can recognize well, if a Christian sins against me, God's already forgiven them. Why would I want to hold this against them? They're going to be perfect and I'm going to be perfect.

And I know they might be having a bad day. We're not all fully sanctified. We're fellow servants.

We know. We're made of the same thing. And if it's lost people out there, all you have to do is look at them and realize, I was like they are now.

The way they are now, so was I. And you know what? I was ignorant and I did those things. You think about how mean you've been to people. Think about how you've wronged people.

Think about the sin you've done against people. And then, I mean, anybody who knows the joy of this is not going to put their fingers around their fellow servant's throat. If you are living a life like that, Jesus says you're not going to be forgiven.

You say, you don't know what? You don't know? I got the kind of husband I was not banking on. You don't know what she's done to me. Yeah, but the thing is, it's a measly little debt.

You see, the whole idea is if you've been forgiven a debt like this, you can afford to forgive these little bitten debts that people owe you. And what is that? And you know what the beauty is? It's not just that our debt's forgiven. He comes then and he says, your debt's gone, but I'm not going to leave you a pauper.

Let's robe you with the best of robes. Put the best shoes on his feet. Cook the fatted calf over here.

Oh, an eternal weight of glory? Throw that on your head. Are you going to go out and grab your fellow servant by the throat? Brethren, you see, it's a matter of faith. What do you believe? See, I believe I've had such a debt of sin forgiven that I feel it when people sin against me.

But you know, if you give people the benefit of the doubt, maybe they're having a bad day. I remember just recently, you know, I drive over to my mechanic and I'm sitting over there and I'm waiting. He told me to be there.

We had an appointment at 9 a.m. I'm there. I'm there early. Packed up my bike.

I went over there and I wait. It troubled me because his vehicle was there, but he wasn't. And so I'm running these thoughts through my mind.

Oh, he probably got off work the day before and he jumped in the car with a buddy and they went off and they probably went to the tavern and he wasn't able to get back here. I'm putting this whole thing together and he's not showing up. And I got my phone and he's got my number and he's not calling me and I wait 30 or 45 minutes or whatever and I drive home and I'm thinking, I don't think I'm ever going to use.

And he had bought parts for me but he didn't make me pay ahead of time. And I'm just thinking, I don't know. And he calls.

And I put it on speaker and he's saying, well, you know, his son's mother and her partner and he's having problems. And I got off the phone with him and Ruby says, you know, I'm thinking, I don't know if I'm going to use this guy again. And Ruby says, well, it sounds like he's having a hard day.

You should take him chocolate. Oh, I did. And he was really thankful and he jumped right on the car and he really did a good job.

But, you know, I heard Lloyd Jones talk this way before. That he said, you know, if you just think, these people might be having a bad day when they do the things or say the things. Or they might be going through a trial in their life.

And, you know, when you've been forgiven this kind of debt, you can afford to think that way. And even if you're wrong, even if the person's just a villain, it's like you were too. You did villainous things.

You did sly things, corrupt things, backward things, evil things. And you've been forgiven. And you know what? Nobody like this comes into your life and touches the apple of his eye without him giving permission.

And if God's brought it into you, you know, it's going to work out for your good. But brethren, I'll tell you, the very fact that he says, as we forgive those who trespass against us or we forgive our debtors, you can know this. In his providence, he's going to allow the debtors into your life.

And see, it'll test what you're made of. It really does. Because the grace of God, the grace of God is powerful to make you a forgiving person.

And if you find you're just not, listen, you want to take that to the Lord, and you want to put that on the altar, and you want to ask him to save you, to well save you, to take away, to save you from the bitterness. You know what it's like. You get bitter, you get jealous, you get cold when a certain person walks in the room or you see them or you hear their name.

Somebody in the family, somebody in the church, somebody at work. Brethren, just lay that on the altar. Lord, help me.

Take that away. Confess that. It's ugly.

It only hurts you. It only makes you miserable. And it'll eventually take you to hell.

Corrie Ten Boom, she said, you remember Corrie Ten Boom, she was put, she was a Dutch woman, World War II, put in Robins Brook concentration camp with her sister Betsy. Betsy died there. Corrie was a Christian.

She carried some real resentment and after the war, she was somewhere in Germany and she was speaking to the people and telling about her experience and telling just about how the Lord was able to save to the uttermost from whatever you've done. However wicked your life has been. And she said she saw Him coming through the crowd and she recognized Him immediately.

He was one of the guards at Robins Brook. And she, it flashed back. Her and Betsy having to walk before the guards naked and Him and the other guards just gawking at them all and laughing and mocking.

And He came up and He raised His hand to shake hers and He said something like, how glorious it was that God could forgive whatever you've done. She said coldness just gripped her. She could not raise her hand.

All the feelings came back. She said she had to ask the Lord, Lord I can't do this. You have to help me.

She said, she raised up her arm and she said when His hand touched her hand she said a warmth went right up her arm and just filled her. And God gave her such a love for that man. Listen, that's what God does.

You can see, Jesus He was perfect, yes. But look at Stephen. When they stoned him, he basically followed in the footsteps of his master.

And he asked God to forgive them. Brethren, that's what true salvation does for us. Remember, this is about praying in the secret place.

And when you go in there to the secret place to pray, one of the things you want to do is unload your heart with any sort of bitterness, jealousy, anger, hatred. Take it all to Him. And wash it away.

Even if it's a battle, you just keep crying out to Him. His grace is sufficient. Father, I pray that You would indeed help us to be a church that doesn't hold anything against anyone.

And that that would indeed be the case. We wouldn't bite, we wouldn't devour. None of that would be allowed here.

Lord, I pray that we would be a holy people. A forgiving people as we've been forgiven. I pray this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. You are dismissed.

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