

Sermon on the Mount Part XXVIII - New Years Message on Forgiveness - Really Good Message!

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[0 : 00] Ordinarily, I have my preaching teaching schedule pretty well mapped out several months, sometimes more than a year in advance.

And invariably, when we come to the Christmas season, I always feel a sense of obligation to detour somewhat and bring a Christmas message.

Same with Thanksgiving and Easter, etc. It seems only appropriate because that's what the calendar calls for, and that's what people tend to expect when they come to church on Christmas Sunday.

But this year, I didn't have to do that because we are talking about the theme of forgiveness. So we spoke last week on a Christmas forgiveness. And if there is anything that Christmas is all about, it's forgiveness.

Because that's the whole rationale for Christ's coming, so that God would be able to maintain His justice and holiness and still extend forgiveness.

[1 : 02] But He could do that, only provided justice was served. Because the just God of the universe cannot function in a sphere of injustice.

And when Jesus Christ came, that set in motion a whole host of things that would materialize 33 years later after His birth, when He would balance the scales of heaven and satisfy the justice and the holiness of God.

Because He who knew no sin would be made sin for us. And yes, it is part of God's job description to forgive. But He has to have a reason for doing so.

And the reason He can forgive is because Jesus Christ paid the penalty. And that's what Christmas is really all about. And we're talking about a Christmas forgiveness.

And really, when you see all of the people scurrying around and all of the reports being given regarding who's going to get their Christmas gifts delivered on time, some of our delivery services taking heat because some packages didn't arrive when they were supposed to, and we keep hearing all kinds of data and information about the retailers and to what extent they think it was a good Christmas.

[2 : 33] And they talk about Black Friday because that's the one you know right after Thursday, Thanksgiving, when they make a whole host of their percentage of their money for the year.

And it's all about gift giving. And people get caught up in it. And they go on these shopping sprees and very often spend a lot of money that they can't afford.

And someone has said that so many Americans buy things they don't need and can't afford to impress people that they don't like. So try to figure the rationale of that.

But that's the American way. And you know it's that way pretty much all over the world, too, at Christmastime. And you ask people, what is all of this about gift giving? And they say, well, it's Christmas.

People give gifts at Christmastime that don't give gifts any other time of the year. And you ask them the rationale for it, and, of course, it comes back with, well, it's Christmas. It only comes once a year.

[3 : 33] You're supposed to buy gifts and you're supposed to get gifts. But why? Why? Well, it's traditional. Okay? But all traditions have to have a rationale or a reason for their origin.

How did gift giving begin? And why do we do that at Christmas? And why don't we give gifts for Labor Day, the Fourth of July? But it's Christmas. And, of course, you don't have to look too far to recall the Magi who came from the East bearing the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh for the

simple reason that you do not come in to the presence of royalty without bearing gifts. So that kind of started the whole tradition. But, you know, Jesus Christ himself was a gift. When Paul said, thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. And it is Christ and the salvation that is wrapped up in him. So even the world that goes around out there in a frenzy buying and selling and gift giving and ordering this online and shopping and all the rest of it, they do it because it's Christmas. And they just don't really connect the dots a lot of times. Because we're not talking simply about the gifts of the Magi. We're talking about the gift of God, the gift of his Son. [5 : 01] And that brings us to forgiveness because forgiveness is a gift. Has it ever occurred to you that nobody has ever earned or deserved forgiveness?

Forgiveness is a gift. Forgiveness is a gift. Forgiveness is a gift. Forgiveness is a gift or an honor. And we may say something like, I'm really, really sorry I said that. I wish I could take it back. Would you please forgive me? You know they don't have to do that. They don't have to forgive you. And, of course, some people say, Ah, it's okay. Don't worry about it. But they didn't forgive you. In their heart, they still harbor a grudge. But true forgiveness really is a gift. And the person who is on the receiving end of it doesn't deserve to be forgiven. [6 : 30] Just think of that, the dynamics of it. If we deserve to be forgiven, we wouldn't need forgiveness. Forgiveness is a gift that we give to an offender.

Jesus Christ was a gift that God gave to the world. Because the inhabitants of the world had deeply offended him, did not deserve, did not earn, could not earn God's forgiveness. So it is a gift. And it's a beautiful thing. Well, I invited you to submit some questions. And some did. Some came from the floor. And some are still neatly tucked away in the Bible that I can't find. But this was left on my desk. Pastor Marv. Election, chosen, and predestination. Confused. Isn't this both for the saved and the lost? Then the Bible tells us that he is not willing that any should perish. [7 : 40] Maybe we are all elected and chosen. Then it's up to us to ask for salvation. God's election and man's decision. Is it ever fully explained? Is it ever fully explained?

Doesn't the Bible teach both? Don't they complement each other? I know I'm saved, so I'm not worried. But I am a bit confused. Or a lot confused. Well, you are not alone. And we will do as much diligence as we can to try and get through today's content. And provide time for addressing these questions. And maybe some questions from the floor, too. So we shall see how it goes. But I do want to warn you. I'm going to be all over the map today. We're going to a lot of different places. And one thing that I really want to try and establish is that there are some careful distinctions that need to be made.

[8 : 37] Or it will not be possible to understand not only the subject of forgiveness, but a lot of other subjects as well. We've already noted in our ongoing series on the Sermon on the Mount, which we began several months ago, that Christ, in chapter 6 of Matthew, set forth a conditional forgiveness. And he simply said, For if you forgive those, if you forgive your brother who has wronged you, then God will forgive you your sins. However, if you do not forgive your brother, then God will not forgive you.

And that's very straightforward. Our Lord is speaking in very clear, plain language there in Matthew 6. And it seems to be exactly what it says, that if you have another party who has wronged you or has asked for forgiveness, and you refuse to forgive them, then don't bother going to God and asking Him to forgive you for anything, because He's not going to do it. That is very definitely a conditional forgiveness. But then, we also consulted with Colossians 1, and maybe we ought to turn there.

We won't need to go to the Matthew text, but let's go to Colossians chapter 1. Let me refresh your pure minds by way of remembrance, Peter said.

[10 : 05] Colossians 1 and verse 13. Boy, a different Bible is like her.

Yeah. Colossians 1. Colossians 1 and verse 13. The apostle says, For He, that is God, God the Father, the reference in verse 12 establishes that.

For God the Father delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son. Now, you see, this is all past tense.

He is talking about a completed reality when he writes to the Colossians. He is not saying that God is going to do this. He is saying, as far as the Colossians are concerned, those who had become believers, this was their true state.

This is that which God had already done for them and to them. He delivered us, Paul is including himself, of course, from the domain or the sphere of darkness, and that's spiritual darkness.

[11 : 20] It has nothing to do with daylight. And transferred us, again, past tense, to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. And then, in verse chapter 2, come over just a page, if you will.

Colossians chapter 2, in verse 13. And when you were dead, again, we're talking about a past tense situation. He's reminding them of what their former state was.

When you were dead, spiritually, in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh. That's a Jewish Gentile thing, which we will not go into now.

He made you alive. That, too, is past tense. It isn't saying He will make you alive. It says He made you alive together with Him, that is, with Christ, having forgiven us all our transgressions.

[12 : 32] That's a completed reality. I refer to this as a blanket. This is a coverall of forgiveness. And it comes by virtue of being in Christ.

Once you are in Christ, you have Christ's forgiveness. You have Christ's eternal life. You have Christ's future. All of these things.

Having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us, and He has taken it out of the way.

All past tense. Having nailed it to the cross. As a result, these to whom He is writing, and all other believers, enjoy a position, a favor, a status with God that is absolutely incredible.

In that status, we enjoy a complete, absolute, total, forever forgiveness.

[13 : 41] It's just like this divine blanket that is just let down that covers all our transgressions, all our iniquities. That's what forgiveness is.

And it's all a gift. God did not owe the world a Savior.

The Savior was provided solely out of divine prerogative based on grace and love. God was not in a position where He said, you know, I have to do something for these people.

Look at the mess the world is in. Look at how rife sin and rebellion is. I have to provide them some way out. No, He didn't. He didn't have to provide anything.

God is obligated to do one thing. And that is, He is obligated to be absolutely just and righteous and holy.

[14 : 44] And He is obligated to do that because that is consistent with His nature and character. So while I have said, God cannot do less than be just, He can do more.

And that's where grace comes in because grace is the more. Grace is the undeserved portion.

Grace is what you do not have giving. You do not have coming. But God is giving it solely because it is His prerogative to give.

He is giving out of the magnanimity of His heart. He is giving because He chooses to do it. He wants to do it. He is motivated by His love for us.

It is God so loved. God loved in this manner, the world, that He went to the extent of giving His own Son.

That is incredible. And He did that simply out of His own great, gracious, loving heart.

[15 : 46] Let no one think they are entitled to God's forgiveness because none of us is entitled. I've often said, and it's a curious thing to consider, but I'm convinced that it's true.

Everybody who thinks they deserve to go to heaven isn't going. Now, that should be a wake-up call for some people. Anybody who thinks they deserve to go to heaven isn't going.

Because you're trying to go on the basis of what you think you've earned or deserve. And you're not going to make it. You are absolutely not going to make it. Because it is a gift.

And you can only receive a gift. You cannot earn a gift. And you cannot deserve a gift. But you can receive a gift. You can accept a gift.

And that's why we talk about in terms of receiving Jesus Christ or accepting Jesus Christ. What we're talking about now is a position that we have.

[16 : 52] And when you come to faith in Christ, you are placed into the spiritual body of Christ. So you become one with him. His righteousness becomes your righteousness.

His destiny becomes your destiny. His forgiveness is your forgiveness. His merit becomes your merit. This is placed within you. And it is something that God does, although we still don't understand how he does it, but he imputes to you.

He doesn't impart to you. Because to impart is to just give it to you. But to impute it to you means he places it in you. So it becomes part of your being.

The righteousness of Jesus Christ. That becomes your official position. That is your status. How righteous is a believer before God?

He is just as righteous as Jesus Christ. That's his standing. That's the way God regards you. And it is a marvelous thing to consider.

[17 : 59] This we call positional truth. It is where you are officially and legally before God. And it doesn't have anything to do with the fact that you don't feel like you're there.

Lots of Christians don't. But you're not there on the basis of how you feel. You're there on the basis of what God says. And God says if you are in Christ, you are identified with him in his death, burial, and resurrection.

It is as if you were in him when he was crucified. You were in him when he was raised from the dead. And you will be in him when he ascends. This is not an easy thing to contemplate.

It is a spiritual truth. And it is a biblical truth. But it is one that frequently escapes us because it just doesn't seem possible that we could have that kind of a status.

But you do. And let me suggest this. If you don't have that kind of a status, you are lost.

[19 : 02] You are absolutely, totally lost. So it is either that or it is lostness.

And nobody is almost lost or almost saved. Brother, am I going to see you in heaven?

Are you going to make it there? Well, I'm trying. Well, that's one that you don't need to expect to see him there because he's not going to make it.

It isn't by trying. It's by trusting. You see, Jesus did it all. Your contribution and my contribution was to mess up.

That's what we do. We mess up. He's the Savior. We're the sinners. He's the Savior. That's the way it works.

[20 : 05] That's the only way that it works. That is our position. But what about this Matthew thing? And if you forgive those who've wronged you, God will forgive you.

If you don't, he won't. And I told you, the line of demarcation is the cross of Christ. Once Jesus was able to say, it is finished, then everything changed.

Everything changed. Because he who knew no sin was made sin for us. And that happened on the cross during that three-hour period when he cried out, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

So, everything changed. That's where the blanket became available. That's when the temple in Jerusalem that had that thick veil between the holy place and the most holy place was torn in two from the top to the bottom.

It's a beautiful thing in the Gospels. When Jesus said, it is finished, it is as if a giant pair of hands, God's hands, reached down from heaven and took that thick veil in the temple and tore it in two and said, I'm through with this thing.

[21 : 32] Because Jesus Christ in his own flesh became the new and living way. The body of Christ became the replacement for that veil.

And now, we do not come to God through a veil that is hanging there, separating the holy place and the most holy place, into which only the high priest could go once a year and not without blood.

Now, Christ has become that veil. That body of his is the veil so that you are free. You have open access to come to God through that new veil, which is the Lord Jesus Christ.

That provides you with your status. That provides you with your salvation. That provides you with being in Christ. That is the blanket of forgiveness.

That's that of which Paul spoke in Colossians in those two passages. So, that is our position. But, what about our practice?

[22 : 45] In our position, we are forgiven all trespasses. Past, present, and future. That's our legal status. And even though we have a status that is absolutely perfect because it comes from Christ, it can't be added to.

It can't be detracted from. We are in Christ. Yet, we still have this enormous capacity for displeasing God. Even as a believer, don't we?

We still have the ability to rebel, to sin, to be surly, unkind, unforgiving, hold grudges, anger, disputings.

All of these things are completely open and available to all believers. Now, we, of all people, have less reason, no justification for manifesting those qualities, but don't try to tell me that we can't.

What do you think churches split over? People get angry about. People get divisive. People don't speak to one another. People hold grudges. That's because we still have an old nature.

[24 : 04] Even though we are perfect in Christ, we are very imperfect in the flesh. And the flesh is what gets us in trouble. What got Paul in trouble? You know, when he addressed this very issue in Romans chapter 7, he as much as says, you know what?

I really don't understand myself at all. The things that I would do, that I know I ought to do, that I want to do, I don't do those things.

And the things I know I shouldn't do, that's wrong for me. I give in, I yield to that thing, and there I am, messed up again.

What's the matter with me anyway? Well, I've paraphrased it a little bit, but you can read Romans chapter 7, and you can discover the frustration that the man who wrote one-third of the New Testament had about his own behavior.

And that is because none of us, even though we have this position of perfection in Christ, none of us is a finished product insofar as our practice is concerned.

[25 : 13] You've seen the little motto that says, please be patient, God is not finished with me yet. Well, he's not finished with any of us.

And when he is finished with us, when we are a complete product, then our practice will equal our position.

But right now, it lags behind. And what we call this thing of spiritual progress, of behaving in such a way that our practice comes closer and closer and closer to our position, what you call that is spiritual growth.

We are becoming conformed to the image of Christ. And all that means is, all that means is, you and I should be more like Jesus Christ this year than we were last year.

And the difference is our spiritual growth. Some Christians don't grow hardly at all. Because growth is determined by your diet, by your intake.

[26 : 36] We know that babies are dependent upon nourishment. And their growth hangs in the balance. If they get nourishment or if they don't, their development is determined by what they take in to that little body.

And that makes it nourished and grows and develops. Works the same way spiritually. Only we're not eating pablum or cereal or whatever it is babies eat, bottle milk.

You know, when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he said, I don't know about you people. He said, I tried to feed you with meat. You weren't able to handle it. I've got to go back to giving you milk.

Back to the ABCs. Because that's all you can handle. You're not growing spiritually. And he had trouble. You know, the Corinthians were Paul's spiritual juvenile delinquents.

And they must have given him fits. So this is all related to our spiritual growth. Meanwhile, some would say this is the same thing as our sanctification.

[27 : 41] And I wouldn't argue with that. But it simply means to become more and more conformed to the image of Christ. We ought to be more like our Lord this year than we were last year.

And the difference is spiritual growth. Meanwhile, what do we do when, as believers, who have already this blanket forgiveness, where all our sins are covered, past, present, and future, and we really mess up big time as a believer?

Of course, some will jump to the conclusion and say, Well, that just proves that he's not really a Christian at all. Because if he was a Christian, there's no way in the world that he would be able to run off with another woman.

Honey, wake up and smell the coffee, will you? Christians can do just as nasty, ornery things as non-Christians.

When we come to faith in Christ, we don't leave our old nature behind. God does not take away from you your capacity to disobey him because you become a Christian. He does take away any right that you have to disobey him, but you can still exercise your volition.

[29 : 02] When God saved you, he did not take your will from you. It's still very much intact. And you can use your will as a Christian to either please or displease God.

You can displease God and please yourself. Lots of Christians do that. They are called fleshly, carnal Christians. Paul tells us when he writes to the Ephesians, Grieve not the Holy Spirit by whom you are sealed unto the day of redemption.

Don't grieve the Holy Spirit. How would you grieve him? How can a Christian bring grief to deity? Isn't God bigger than that? Can't he handle disobedient Christians? Grieve not the Spirit of God. And we're told don't quench the Spirit. That's like pouring water on a fire or a flame that is being kindled. You just douse it. Quench it.

[30 : 13] Put it out. That is, the Spirit of God is wanting to do something in your life, and you say, No. You throw water on it. That's because your volition remains intact.

He hasn't taken that from you. God does not make you be obedient to him. He wants you to, and he's given you every reason to, but he doesn't force you to.

Sometimes, in God's grace, he will, as I can attest to, he will call you out to the woodshed.

God has his two-by-fours, you know, his wake-up calls. And they, too, are all on the basis of God's love, because he disciplines his own children, those whom he loves.

And Paul says, or whoever it was that wrote Hebrew, he says, If you endure not chastening, wherewith all our sons, all sons endure chastening, that is, child training, correcting.

[31 : 20] And if you've never had God discipline you in your life in any way, the writer says, Then are you bastards and not sons. You really don't belong to the Lord, and he's not divinely disciplining you because you're not his kid.

God only disciplines his own children, and it would be as inappropriate for him to discipline the devil's children as it would be for you to spank the kids next door because you think they're misbehaving.

Well, they're not your children. It's not your place to discipline them. It's their father's place or their mother's place to discipline them. So we have this ability, even as Christians, to really disobey God. David is perhaps a prime example. Committed adultery. And then he set up the woman's husband for murder.

Make sure that he would get killed. And David, if you can believe this, David is spoken of as a man after God's own heart. Well, how in the world could a man after God's own heart do such a heinous thing as that?

[32 : 35] Murder and adultery. Aren't those the two biggies? David was guilty of both of them. And if you read that 51st Psalm, he comes clean.

It's a fascinating, fascinating psalm. David learned some really bitter lessons the hard way, but he came back the right way.

Now, David had a relationship with God, but you've got to remember something. That relationship that David had with God, although I've every reason to believe that it was personal, it was also a covenantal kind of relationship under the Mosaic Covenant, because David lived and functioned under the Old Testament, not the New, and so did Jesus Christ.

So there was something different about forgiveness on the other side of the cross. And I don't profess to understand all about it, but I do know that there really is a difference. So when we, as believers, who already have this blanket of forgiveness, when we really mess up, just flat-out sin, what do we do?

How do we handle that? We had a Bible conference several years ago here. I was sitting in that seat right there, and the speaker, I don't even recall who it was at the time, but it was a grace Bible conference, and the speakers were all preachers of the gospel of grace message.

[34 : 11] And they were going on about how we do not apply, nor need to apply, 1 John 1.9, which says, if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, and we do not embrace that as grace believers because that is not Pauline truth.

And articles have been written on it. And there was a Q&A; time, and I asked the speaker, I said, well, if 1 John 1.9 is not for us, we all know that believers can and do commit sins as Christians, what do we do about our sin when we know we have sinned, if we are not to apply 1 John 1.9? And the answer was, well, that's a good question. We'll have to look into that sometime. And that's as far as it went. It wasn't a very satisfying answer.

Now, I am of the opinion that we ought not to bind ourselves so rigidly to the Pauline epistles.

Nobody is disputing that God gave an abundance of revelations to the Apostle Paul that he never gave to anyone else.

[35 : 45] And these are revealed in the epistles, the letters that Paul wrote to the Corinthians and the Romans and the Galatians and so on. What Jesus Christ did for Paul and to Paul was he gave Paul an update that didn't become known until after Christ ascended to heaven.

This is after his 40 days on earth and after his ascension to heaven, recorded in Acts 1, when everyone would have thought that Jesus was gone.

He's off the scene. He's ascended. He's back in heaven. And the very last word that he had to give was Matthew 28.

Go ye into all the world. Preach the gospel to every creature. Baptizing them, etc., etc. That's the last information that Christ had to impart. And that's pretty much the party line.

That's where everything, that's where the revelation stopped. But, dear friends, when you go on and read in the book of Acts, that this ascended Christ, who was no longer on earth giving marching orders to anyone, he's ascended.

[37 : 08] He's now in heaven. But he is speaking to Paul from heaven. Saul, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

This is all in Acts chapter 9. And it's a fascinating account. And I don't suppose that anyone since that day has had a conversion account that could begin to equal that dramatic Damascus Road experience that Saul of Tarsus had.

And that was the beginning of the ascended Christ revealing information to Paul. And the text says when he, when the Lord appears to, or communicates with Ananias and says, I want you to go and find Saul of Tarsus and lay hands on him that he may receive his sight.

And then he talks about, he is raising up Saul of Tarsus to be the apostle to the Gentiles. Apostles. What?

Apostles to the Gentiles? Who ever heard of such a thing? The Jews are the only one who have any apostles. Read the calling of the apostles by our Lord in Matthew chapter 10.

[38 : 25] Peter, James, and John, and all 12 of them are named there. They are the apostles. And he says, don't go to the Gentile. Don't go to the Gentiles. Confine your ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Because he had a message that was just for Israel. It was a kingdom message. But then, he raises up some years later, after he's ascended, Saul of Tarsus, and he says, I'm going to send you to the Gentiles, as the apostle to the Gentiles.

Well, the Gentiles never had an apostle. The Jews had 12. Gentiles never had any. And God says, well, they do now.

And his name is Paul the apostle. So, there is a vivid distinction.

And it is only to deficiency in understanding the whole New Testament if you missed that. This is really critical stuff.

[39 : 30] This is a whole new ball game. Everything is different. Now, everything before was Jew-Gentile. Jew-Gentile. Never the twain shall meet.

But in Christ, they meet. And he has made of the two one new man. Neither Jew nor Gentile exclusively, but both of them together.

And they now constitute the body of Christ. And they have a whole different thing. And this is just amazing. So, when Paul was raised up and begins addressing different issues, you will see that there is a huge disparity between information that Paul has to give compared to the information that was available before.

But that ought not to surprise us because we deal with that all the time. We call these updates. Has anybody ever gotten an update for their program on their computer?

You ever get an update? Sure you do. And what the provider of the software or whatever is telling you is the way this used to be, this process, that is now obsolete.

[40 : 50] Now we are doing a new thing. This is a new update. And it's a new add-on. So you're supposed to disregard the old, although you learned some things from it while you had it, but you don't operate with that anymore.

You operate with the new one. That's exactly what Paul is doing. He is providing an update. But if you are stuck in the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, you don't get the update.

And let me tell you something. That's where most of Christendom is today. And that's one reason that we are in such deplorable shape because they're not paying any attention to the updates. They are fighting. They are fighting World War III with World War I weapons. Little wonder we're not making much ground.

Little wonder we're not having much of an impact. We don't even know what the operating system is. And it's the risen Christ. It's new information.

[41 : 56] And it is revealed exclusively in the Pauline Epistles. How do we know that? Because that's what God said. Paul said, An abundance of revelations were made known unto me.

And these we are supposed to be following. But when we don't, and as I pointed out before, Paul's revelations that are found in his epistles, guess what?

They're going to be updated. He won't have the last final word. You read the general epistles in the book of the Revelation. That's the update to Paul's epistles.

So we've got the Old Testament updated by the Gospels. We've got the Gospels updated by the epistles. And we'll have Paul's epistles updated by the general epistles beginning with Hebrews. And Revelation will be the last update. And then the whole picture will be complete. So, we're still dealing with this issue of the conditionality.

[42 : 59] And I'm going to address that next week. And we'll look at this 1 John 1.9 because it sets forth a condition.

What about the umbrella? But the condition in 1 John 1.9 is if we confess our sins. Isn't that a condition?

If we confess our sins. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin. And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

But wait a minute. What about the blanket? Aren't we already cleansed from all unrighteousness? Aren't we already forgiven all trespasses? Yes. That's in regard to your position.

But this 1 John 1.9 is in regard to your practice and to your fellowship. He isn't saying if you confess your sins God will forgive you and save you again.

[44 : 05] Well there is no saving again. But God will forgive you and cleanse you as a child of his. And that is conditional. That has nothing to do with your eternal destiny.

It has nothing to do with your salvation. It has everything to do with how you and God get along together. In the same way that an earthly father and an earthly child may be on the outs.

Son and father aren't speaking. There has been an offense, a grievous offense. And dad is really angry with his son.

and he says things like, I could kill him. Well, he wouldn't kill him and he couldn't kill him. But in anger he says things like that.

Is he no longer his son? Of course he's his son. And what happens? Father and son get together and there is an admission, a confession.

[45 : 16] and I'm sorry. Please forgive me. And then there is the forgiveness and the embrace.

And you know what? Everything is forgiven. And it's back on an even keel. The son never stopped being a son. But the relationship was strained.

There's a lot of strained relationships in every congregation. people who are on the outs with family members haven't spoken to each other in years and don't want to. There's a lot of that nonsense going on.

Shouldn't be, but it is. And we're going to address some of these things in the future. So if you won't be able to say amen, you may be saying oh me.

You know, this is where we all live. This is part of our fallenness. And we will be addressing this as we continue on with the Sermon on the Mount because it too has a lot to say regarding these things.

[46 : 21] So we're going to give you the Sermon on the Mount as it is and show you where it was when and then give you the update and why that has to be taken into consideration.

I will allow just a couple of moments for the question if there is one. Joe, we've got a microphone here. Just a second, Joe. people really get distraught with me when I don't have the questions on the disc.

Okay. You said God, of course, is just God and that's why he has to deal with us like children, you know, discipline us and so forth before our sins and not following the Holy Spirit and letting our natures take hold.

But does he deal with us sometimes like he did with Job? You know, Job, you know, was a God-fearing man all the way, but yet God allowed a lot of, of bad things come into his life, like he was being disciplined for something, that's all his friends thought he was, but he wasn't. Does God deal with us the same way today at times too? That's a very good question. I wish I could give you a very good answer, but all I can say is God's ways of dealing with people are absolutely limitless, and they are in keeping with his creativity.

[47 : 34] God has, well, the word, the only word I can use is limitless. God has limitless ways of dealing with people, and everything he does in dealing with an individual is always tailor-made.

God doesn't discipline you with somebody else's discipline. We all have strengths and weaknesses and needs and fears, and God takes into consideration our whole psyche and everything about us. It's marvelous that he is that kind of God who is able to do that, and he knows exactly what we need by way of discipline. And I'll tell you one thing, all discipline hurts.

I mean, you may only get one or two whacks, or you may get ten whacks, but every one of them hurts. And God disciplines, and you know something? His discipline is never punishment.

It's correction. It's chastening, and it's always motivated by love and your best interests. It's never, well, God's going to get even with you. Hey, if God really got even with you, you would, you know where you would be.

[48 : 43] Anyone else? Yes, ma'am, over here. Right here. is the devil roaming the world and causing us to sin, or is it just our own sinful nature that causes things to happen?

That's a very good question, ma'am, and I think the answer is, and I trust this won't come across as a cop-out, but I think it's both. I think it's both. Someone has aptly said that Christians are able to sin in such a way and lay the blame at the devil's doorstep that would make him blush.

And I think we have that capability. Second Corinthians, one of my most, what I think is one of the most insightful passages in all of the scripture, is Second Corinthians 4, and verse 4.

And Paul said, if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, whose minds, whose thinking ability and thinking processes, the God of this age has blinded.

The world functions with blinded minds, and they are so blinded they don't even know they're blind. That's pretty blind. They're blind, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, which is the image of God, should shine unto them.

[50 : 10] So yes, Satan is the God of this age, and he is busily engaged in confusing, confounding the minds of people, and he often uses other people to do it.

He uses people to do it. In the same way that God uses people for positive ways, Satan uses people for negative ways. He's never had an original thought in his life.

He's a great imitator. He's a great copycat, but there's nothing about him that's original, and he seeks to disrupt the plan and program of God any way that he can.

We'll take time for one more comment or question, if there is one. Is there? Okay, Roger, or John, whoever.

I, with the struggles we've had in our family, I had some dear friends give me books about Job and his suffering, and, you know, I got over the fact that I've had heart issues, and if God's punishing me or disciplined me because of past actions or thoughts or whatever, I'm okay with that myself, but I really struggled, and Susan also with Travis because he was just, you know, he was just a perfect little gentleman growing up.

[51 : 43] It was hardly, I think the worst he ever did was when my other son Casey bugged him to death, and he had him down choking him, and, you know, they were with grandma then, and she says, you can't kill him, you can't kill him, but, you know, when Job made the statement, though he slay me, yet I will trust him, I've delved into that and tried to get a handle on that, and it just comes down to faith, and I've just decided with our situation that it's God's issue with us, and I've got to let it go at that.

I can't, you know, I can be mad at God, but what does that prove? I'm not going to win that, you know, and so, be mad at God is just the opposite of trusting him, and you know, this is, what you're talking about here, and what you're dealing with, I think, personally, is as tough as it gets.

I mean, if you really, if you really want to, if you really want to do in somebody, go for their kids. Go for their kids.

Nothing does such a thorough job on a parent than that. And it provides reason that is just remarkable. Yes. Yeah, probably the best example I have of how to handle situations is what you've

been through, Marv, with your family, and how you've overcome it and just kept right plugging along.

That has been an inspiration to me. And I've got a few other examples, but I won't name names in this church that just showed me. I appreciate that, Roger.

[53 : 28] Thank you. I really do. And you know what? This is how we're supposed to minister, one to another. You weep with those who weep, and you rejoice with those who rejoice, and none of us is exempt from the valleys of life.

I want to close with this comment, with this illustration. It was given by my wife Barbara, and it was in conjunction with our going through the course that we took with the Larry Crabb material several years ago, and Daryl Henderson led the study group.

There were about a dozen of us, and the book was entitled *Shattered Dreams*, and I still recommend it highly. It's a wonderful, wonderful treatment of adversity and difficulty, and the statement that Barb made in connection with that, and I never forget it, couldn't forget it if I wanted to, and it was so powerful, and she was saying this against the backdrop of the study of the book, and against the backdrop of the fact that we had a mentally retarded challenged child whom we dearly loved and lost her unexpectedly at the age of 30, and it just, absolutely devastated us, but the comment that she made was this, she said, you know, it would be, it wouldn't be easy, of course, but it wouldn't be nearly as hard to accept the kind of adversities that can come into our life, and they're almost always associated with a loss.

Think of that, with a loss. loss. It's a loss of health, a loss of wealth, a loss of a loved one, a loss of a position, some kind of a loss, and it wouldn't be nearly as hard to deal with life's critical losses if we could only see that it serves some good purpose, some good end.

But, you know, more often than not, we can't. We can't see that. We just can't. We ask all kinds of questions, and we ask God all kinds of questions.

[55 : 52] Why this? Why me? Why now? Why, why, why, why? These are perfectly logical questions. Any thinking mind is going to ask them. And we want to know, what did I do to deserve this?

How come this is happening to me? And it's the Job thing that Roger was talking about all over again. And you know, when we go through these real difficult times, if we could only see years ahead, or even maybe in eternity, how it's going to play out, and how it's going to have a positive effect, we could take it.

We could say, oh, so that's where this is going. So that's going to be the final outcome. Okay, I can suck it up, and I can handle that, because I know where it's going, and there's going to be some good income out of it.

But you can't see that. And if you could, you wouldn't need this thing called faith or trust, because then you'd have the knowledge.

Now, one day, we won't need it, because Paul said three things, faith, hope, and love. Only one of them is going to survive, because the time is coming when faith will not be needed anymore, because the reality will be here.

[57 : 09] And the time is coming when hope will not be needed anymore, because the hope will be fulfilled. But the time will never come when love will be out of style. It will always be in vogue.

Isn't that precious? Wonderful. Would you stand with me, please? Father, we still have many questions, but we know that the judge of all the earth will do right.

And we know that you are committed to working all things together for our good, for those who love you, even when they hurt, and even when we don't know why, and even when we cannot see the outcome.

we are called upon to simply trust. As Job said, though he slay me, yet will I trust him.

Father, we know that nothing pleases you more than to be believed and trusted, and we want to be a people who learn to do that.

[58 : 13] You are worthy of being believed. we bless you in Christ's wonderful name. Amen.