

Nathan Rambeck -- Biblical Forgiveness - Forgiving One Another

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[0 : 00] Happy Independence Day. July 4th. I was saying earlier at the adult Bible study that, you know, you can say happy July 4th, which is fine, but, you know, Canada has a July 4th too.

Ours is special though, right? So, I did, in thinking about this day and what we celebrate, you know, America is a country among, what is there, 200 and some countries in the world?

215 or it's changing all the time. I don't know what it is, but there is something that makes America special. And what is that? What is the thing that makes America special? Yeah, freedom. Isn't that, people come from all over the world to America and the one thing, the primary thing that they come to our country for is because of the freedom, the liberty that we have.

That, you know, many of us are concerned, right? That those freedoms and liberties are being taken away or being chipped away, if you will.

But in thinking about that, you know, our founders, who were so concerned about liberty, had some things to say. And I think when, as we strive for liberty in this nation, the thing that is the foundation of liberty is virtue.

[1 : 29] And I printed this thing off. I put some in the back like Pastor Marv does. I love how he prints these things off and makes them available. I like to read them. My kids love to read them.

And it's not something that I'll necessarily read through, but the title is, Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. And it talks a little bit about some of the things that our founders in this nation wrote about virtue.

And I also put some quotes on the back. I'll just read maybe one or two of them. Samuel Adams says this, Neither the wisest constitution nor the wisest laws will secure the liberty and happiness of a people whose manners are universally corrupt.

He, therefore, is the truest friend of the liberty of his country who tries most to promote its virtue and who, so far as his power and influence extend, will not suffer a man to be chosen into any office of power and trust who is not a wise and virtuous.

Man. I think many people think, in this country today, think that, oh, we can have all these freedoms and liberties, but we don't have to, virtue is not that big of a deal. And I think we see with our own eyes, right, what happens when a nation declines in virtue and along with it goes liberty.

[2 : 55] So there's a quote in here from Thomas Jefferson, or not Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, who was a deist, by the way, wasn't even an orthodox Christian, if you will, but he wasn't a very good deist.

Deists believe, right, that God kind of created everything and wanted up like a clock and then went off on vacation or something like that. He's not actually involved in our lives or in the actions of the world.

But he actually was the one, I think, that during the time where we're having the debates about the Constitution and all this kind of stuff, he said, hey, that's everybody. We need to appeal to God and ask for his help.

So not a very good deist, but that's what he, that's, I think, what he went by. But he said this, which one is it? I also, I think also that general virtue is more probably to be expected and obtained from the education of youth than from the exhortations of adult persons.

Bad habits and vices of the mind being like diseases of the body more easily prevented in youth than cured in adults. Isn't that true? But as we pursue righteousness, we have righteousness in Christ and it's through Christ, right, that, and through the liberty that we have in him, that virtue actually comes best.

[4 : 31] That's how God designed it. So, anyway. And then Roger gave me this. This is a little post, I guess, about that great ride that Paul Revere made.

But, you know, as some of you might know, it wasn't just Paul Revere. It says this, I'm 71 years old and have never heard her name. All the history I took in school and all the women's movement stuff never knew about this child.

While I do now, and I won't forget it, her, how important her charge was and how courageous she must have been. Love this story. This month in U.S. history, we remember that famous ride that would warn the colonies that the British were coming.

The colonel needed someone he could trust, someone brave enough, someone who could ride along a long distance through the darkness from 9 p.m. until dawn, all through the night. Someone who could fight off enemy combatants to alert the colonial militia to the approach of British forces.

So the colonel chose the best man for the job. He chose Sybil Luddington, his 16-year-old daughter. Sybil Luddington was born on April 5, 1761.

[5 : 44] This month on April 26, 1777, her father asked his young daughter to take this dangerous ride. On the night of April 18, 1775, Revere made his famous ride and history remembers him well because of the famous poem by Longfellow who would tell the tale saying, Listen, my children, and you shall hear of the midnight ride of Paul Revere.

But many people do not know about the four other riders who warned their communities of the approach and movement of the British forces. The five heroes, including Paul Revere, were Samuel Prescott, Israel Bisson, William Dawes, and the one who I am dedicating this post to, Sybil Luddington, who at that time was only 16 years old.

On that night, Colonel Henry Luddington chose his daughter to take that famous ride in history. Sybil set out at 9 p.m. that night in the rain to warn the colonists at Danbury, Connecticut of the approach of the British.

She would make a double journey, make a journey double to that of Revere, totaling 40 miles, riding through Kent to Farmer Mills and then returning back home again. During her famous ride, she gathered her father's troops, knocked on doors, and warned the countryside of the British troops incoming attack.

And she fought off a highwayman with a long stick. By dawn, she was exhausted, damp from the rain, but had accomplished her mission, warning the colonists and bringing together 400 soldiers ready to march and drive the enemy troops from the area.

[7 : 15] She would later be commended by George Washington for her heroism. Each April, since 1979, the Sybil Luddington 50-kilometer foot race has been held in Carmel, New York, and then a statue has been erected in her honor in Lake Glenita Carmel, New York.

So when you hear the tale of Paul Revere this month, remember about the other riders, one of which was the courageous Sybil Luddington. So that was neat. All right.

So let's go ahead and get into our message today. We're talking about forgiveness.

And forgiveness is one of those things. It's, you know, as I was doing study and kind of researching what other people have to say about forgiveness, one of the things that comes up so often is that forgiveness is something that very clearly is something that is, that came out of Christianity.

You know, if you look at other, both religions as well as worldviews, forgiveness is not that big of a part. Most of the time when people are talking about forgiveness, they talk about Bible verses that are about forgiveness and things like that.

[8 : 44] And forgiveness is at the core of our Christian faith. And it's something that we should be good at as Christians. And we aren't always, but we can always, we can always get better.

By the way, just to follow up from last week, you know, last week, we talked about the forgiveness between us and God. God, you know, we don't forgive God, right? He forgives us.

God doesn't need forgiveness. I've heard some people talk about forgiving God. That's kind of, that's a bizarre concept.

God does not need our forgiveness. He is holy and righteous and good and has been for all of eternity. But we our sinners, or at least those of us in Christ now, have been and need God's forgiveness.

We talked about how ultimately through Christ we have total forgiveness. We don't need to keep short accounts. We don't need to keep going to God and asking for forgiveness every day.

[9 : 56] Say our nightly prayers where we ask God to forgive us because we have forgiveness and that promise that no matter what we do, as long as we are in Him, which we are in Christ when we put our faith and trust in Him, we have forgiveness.

But that makes us kind of uncomfortable. It makes a lot of people uncomfortable. How, that's kind of a risk, right? When you just give people forgiveness without requiring some kind of threat of the law.

And so, but it is something that we as Christians need to live with. You know, Paul said in Romans 3, 8, he says, and why not say, let us just do evil that good may come as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say their condemnation is just.

He said, you shouldn't say that. But some people, they hear this message that I'm preaching about the grace of God and they think, oh, well, you're just saying that you can do whatever you want. And of course, that's not what the message is.

We ought to live upright lives. We want to do that, but the threats from the law don't actually give us the power that we need to live that kind of life.

[11 : 18] Barb sent me something this week and it was a prayer and I thought this was really good so I wanted to, but I think this is the heart of the Christian. Search me, oh God, and know my heart. I come before you with a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, laying all things bare before you.

I seek your conviction. Please make me aware of all that is within me that is not pleasing to you. I know I'm already forgiven for these things, but I want you to know that I'm sorry.

Let me continue to see sin through your eyes and acknowledge it as evil. And when I do sin, I ask for your conviction so that complacency does not take root in me.

And so, we can have that confidence that we are forgiven in Christ and still have a heart of conviction and a brokenness when we do sin.

We don't ever want to sin either against God or against our neighbor. But we know that when we do, we can still have confidence that we are forgiven and have eternal life in Him.

[12 : 22] But today, let's kind of switch a little bit. We talked last week, I said forgiveness between us and God is, you can think of it as vertical, up and down, right?

God in heaven and us. And then we have the horizontal aspect of forgiveness between one another. But I wanted to do the forgiveness between us and God first because I think it lays the right foundation.

And there are different views on how we ought to forgive one another. But I think it should be founded on our relationship with God and what He has done for us. We want to forgive as God forgives.

And as Christians, we're supposed to model our lives, what, after Christ and after the Lord. We want to be godly, right? And godly means like Him, like God.

We want to emulate both His commitment to justice and His abundance of mercy. And that is the wrestling match, if you will.

[13 : 30] That's the balancing act, some people might say, when it comes to forgiveness. You have a need for justice, but also a need for mercy. God is a god of justice.

We want to be people of justice. God is a god of mercy. We want to follow Him in that. We should show mercy as well. But one of the things we talked about last week was the reason why God is so gracious and merciful.

And it's because He wants to dwell with us. We saw that from the beginning in the garden to the end in Revelation.

God wants to dwell with His people. Even despite our sin and brokenness. And in the same manner, we should seek to dwell with one another in peace.

And that requires, because of our sinfulness, this layer of mercy that should be the underpinning, the foundation of the Christian life. Just as God is abundant in mercy and willing to forgive, so we should be abundant in mercy and willing to forgive.

[14 : 42] All right, so time for a story. And I do kind of have to apologize for the story. But this is a story about something that happened in the news in the last, I don't know, year.

And there's a magazine out there called Teen Vogue. Anybody? No, I'm not going to ask that question. Teen Vogue, I'm sure, is probably not a great magazine.

I can imagine. I don't think I've ever read it. And so, it's a little bit embarrassing talking about Teen Vogue, but I thought the story was worth talking about.

So let me see, I've got to find it here. All right. And this is an editorial posted in the New York Post. It says, Cancel culture just proved itself more powerful than the devil and Prada herself.

Year-old tweets, you made as a foolish, ignorant teen and later profusely apologized for mean you can't be trusted as editor of Teen Vogue. Alexi McCammond, deemed in 2019 the emerging journalist of the year by the National Association of Black Journalists and supported by Winter and the rest of the top Condé Nast management for the Teen Vogue job, won't be starting next week as editor-in-chief of the Fashion and Lifestyle magazine after a staff rebellion over offensive remarks posted in 2011, so 10 years ago.

[16 : 13] She was a freshman in college then and when they surfaced two years back, she apologized and deleted the tweets. So this, somebody found out about these two years ago and she apologized.

She apologized again this month after a couple dozen Teen Vogue staffers erupted when she was named their new boss. Alexi McCammond won't be starting next week as Teen Vogue's new editor-in-chief after a staff rebellion over offensive remarks post...

Yeah, I guess they're repeating that. But in this world, but in the world the left has created, there is no path to forgiveness. There is no redemption.

There is only smug dismissal. Childhood idiocy makes you a pariah for life. And this misbegotten ideology carries such weight that junior staffers can carry the day against top management.

Not just when it comes to teen fashion magazines either. The same dynamic has now purged multiple senior figures at the New York Times. All the old liberals are too scared to cross the radical kids.

[17 : 16] But we suspect the radical kids will come to hate the world they created. The cancel monsters will find that no one is pure enough and no one can change. They'll burn everyone and everything down.

And so that was just a short op-ed but it's people heard probably cancel culture, right? That's been something that's been in the news for a while.

And there are lots of examples. That's just one of them. And to be honest, it's not necessarily a bad thing to cancel people. You know, if you have some kind of a leader who's committed a crime, think of a politician, right?

You found out they're involved in corruption. like they should be canceled. They should not be in that leadership position anymore, if you will. But when we talk about cancel culture, it's really about making people suffer for the sins that they've committed.

And many times that they've turned from many years ago, but we want to make them suffer. So many times with this cancel culture stuff, like half the time, the things that people are enraged about are what I call fake sins.

[18 : 28] You know, sometimes it's actual virtue, right, that people are upset about. Many times Christian virtue. And I'm not sure what the motivation is for this.

I think, I think to some extent it's got to be, you know, people's hearts are so corrupt and their lives are a mess and full of a lack of virtue. And I think it's a way to try to make yourself feel like you're one of the good guys.

You know, if I'm going to stand against these kinds of things, I'm going to establish a moral high ground for myself. But I think the end of that article sums it up best.

This is the author wrote. Eventually, they'll burn everyone and everything down. And that's what happens, right, with unforgiveness. You know, people mess up all the time.

And without a layer of forgiveness in our lives, everything just eventually comes burning and crashing down. There's another story.

[19 : 40] And, but it has kind of a different, this is a story of forgiveness and not cancel culture. this is a story of the trial for a man who was killed.

His name was Botham Jean. And, I don't know how long ago this was, but there was a police officer, a lady, her name's Amber Geiger. She came home from duty.

She was on duty as a police officer and came home really tired, walked into her apartment. There was a man in her apartment and she freaked out and she ended up shooting him because there was a stranger in her apartment.

And, unfortunately, she later realized this was not my apartment. It looked like my apartment, but it wasn't. And so, she went to trial for murder, which is right and just and good.

We can't allow people to make those kinds of mistakes, right? We need to uphold justice in that regard. But, here's a story from CNN, just a snippet anyway.

[20 : 49] It says this, it was the last thing anyone was expecting. Former Dallas police officer Amber Geiger had just been sentenced to 10 years in prison for fatally shooting, a black man, Botham Jean, in his own apartment.

Jean's younger brother, Brant Jean, was on the witness stand Wednesday giving a victim impact statement when he turned to the judge and he made a most unusual request.

I don't know if this is possible, but can I give her a hug, please? He asked. What happened next stunned both the courtroom and the nation.

Jean stepped off the witness stand and stepped over to Geiger. The two hugged for nearly a minute. I forgive you and I know if you go to God and ask him, he will forgive you.

Jean told Geiger, I think giving your life to Christ is the best thing Botham would want for you. Now those are two very different stories, right?

[22 : 00] One is all about justice and making sure that we hold people accountable for what they've done in the past. And another one, it's in the context of justice, we are holding somebody accountable in the eyes of the law to something that they've done.

But when you read that story about that magazine editor, does it warm your heart?

Does a tear come to your eye? No. Even if you think, well, that person is getting true justice, it wouldn't bring that kind of a reaction.

But when we read this story about this act of forgiveness forgiveness, from a young man who lost his brother, it does, it warms our hearts.

There's a feeling of something amazing just happened there, something we might call divine.

[23 : 08] You know, we all yearn for mercy. I think the reason why we have that kind of reaction to stories like that is because we can put ourselves in the shoes of both people, right?

We can put ourselves in the shoes of that police officer who made a horrible mistake. We have made horrible mistakes.

In that case, it was accidental. In some cases, it's not accidental. We've made quote, mistakes that are very much on purpose. others. But then we can put ourselves in the shoes of those who have been hurt by others.

And we know the impact that can be made when reconciliation, when forgiveness, when forgiveness happens.

things like, what I'd like to do in the context of those two stories is look to the Bible and talk about forgiveness and what it looks like.

[24 : 19] There are questions that come up with forgiveness and not everybody has the same answers. Not all Christians have the same answers. Things like, do I always have to forgive?

forgive? Questions like, should we require any conditions before we forgive? Is forgiveness and reconciliation the same thing?

Do you have to reconcile? What if I don't feel like forgiving someone? How do I respond if somebody won't forgive me?

Should I confront someone who's injured me? Those are just a handful of questions. I could probably list a dozen other ones when it comes to forgiveness. And I'm not going to try to answer even all those, but just try to provide a biblical framework that we can use to answer a lot of the detailed questions that come up.

Over the years, as I've thought about this question and how to live my Christian life in forgiving others, and talking to others about it, I've realized that there's a wide variety of views and disagreements among Christians.

[25 : 33] I've gotten into debates with some people who are very upset at me because of my views on forgiveness. And so I say that to say, you know, if any of you have any disagreements with anything that I say today, just consider what I have to say.

It's okay. It's okay for Christians to disagree on things sometimes. But let's get into defining forgiveness. And even when we get into the definition, we already get into trouble.

I did two things. So the dictionary provides definitions for words. And so I looked up in the dictionary, what is the definition of forgiveness?

And here's what I found, and I can't remember, I think this is Merriam Webster. Here's the definition of forgiveness. To stop feeling angry or resentful towards someone for an offense, a flaw, or mistake.

To stop feeling angry or resentful towards someone for an offense, a flaw, or a mistake. Kind of in line with that, I went to the, I forget the website, but it was a psychology, I think it was called Psychology Today.

[26 : 48] It's a webpage about the topic of forgiveness. And this is what it says. Forgiveness is the release of resentment or anger. Forgiveness doesn't mean reconciliation. One doesn't have to return to the same relationship or accept the same harmful behavior from an offender.

Forgiveness is vitally important for the mental health of those who have been victimized. It propels people forward rather than keeping them emotionally engaged in an injustice or trauma.

Forgiveness has been shown to elevate mood, enhance optimism, and guard against anger, stress, anxiety, and depression.

But with these definitions of forgiveness, I want us to go back to what we talked about last week about us and God. And take this definition and filter it through that and ask these questions.

forgiveness. Does this definition of forgiveness describe the same kind of forgiveness that God grants to us? And there was a lot there, right?

[27 : 56] So there might be some overlap, some things that agree and some things that don't. But let me ask these questions. When God forgives us, what's the purpose behind it?

Does he forgive us to release himself from resentment and anger? Is that why he forgives us? Does God forgive us to help improve his mental health?

Yeah, that's a pretty easy one. No? Does God forgive in order to improve his mood, his optimism, to de-stress, or to help with his depression?

No, not at all. God forgives for very different reasons. One of the things that I do when looking at definitions of words, especially when studying the Bible, is you can look at the modern dictionaries, but a lot of times, you know, words change.

Definitions of words change. Sometimes it's cultural. Sometimes it's just time itself. Words get old. But I looked up this, the definition of the word forgiveness in Webster's 1828 dictionary.

[29 : 20] This is one of the very first dictionaries. Anybody ever, anybody have one of those? Webster's 1828? A couple. So if you don't, you should. Now, you can access it online.

Just go online and type in the word. Just Google Webster's 1828 and you'll find it. That's what I did. But a tremendous resource. One of the things you'll find in that dictionary is so many of the examples of how to use the words are Bible verses.

It's just an incredible resource. But here's what Webster's 1828 says about forgiveness. It says this, the act of forgiving. Well, that's helpful.

But it says this, the pardon of an offender by which he is considered and treated as not guilty. That's pretty different, isn't it?

So let me read the modern version again. To stop feeling angry or resentful towards someone for an offense, flaw, or mistake. And so I want to contrast those two.

[30 : 25] Because I think there's this, and I'll call it, and I've heard other people call it, a therapeutic view of forgiveness. Where forgiveness is something that we do that helps us.

That does something in us. And it's, you know, there's, for everything, there's always a truth there, right? Is it true that forgiveness will help us? Many times it is.

In some cases it may not. But in many cases when we forgive, we are helped in some way. But is that the purpose of forgiveness?

So, to stop feeling angry or resentful towards someone. That's the modern definition. Webster's 1828, the act of forgiving, the pardon of an offender by which he is considered and treated as not guilty.

Notice how there's no feeling, there's no emotion there. This is a transaction that happens between two people. Where there is an offense, something that has happened, and there is a debt that is incurred.

[31 : 37] Forgiveness is releasing that debt, letting it go. Now, many times there is emotions involved in that. But, not necessarily, and that is not, and I don't think should be, the purpose.

So, I want to make this point when it comes to this definition of forgiveness. Forgiveness is a gift. And it's not a gift that we give ourselves.

Forgiveness is a gift that we give to someone else. Right? When God forgave us, is that a gift that he gave to himself? No, when he forgave us, it's a gift he offered to us.

And so, when we forgive, we need to have that same spirit, that same mind, that same heart. Now, I will say this, when God forgave us, did he benefit?

Yeah. What did he, how did he benefit? it? Relationship. Thank you, Joe. He got us.

[32 : 49] Now, some of you, well, are we really a gift? Well, God thought so. I mean, that's, that's pretty incredible. I don't know why he would, you know, some might ask, why would he want somebody like me?

Isn't that amazing? That's what he wanted. God. So, he gets, he gets a benefit out of it by offering forgiveness and mercy. God could have, right? We talked about this last week.

He could be just and just say, forget about you guys. You know, with any one of us or with just the whole world in general. Never mind, you guys are too much work, too much of a problem.

But he doesn't. He offers us great abundance abundance of mercy. So, this whole modern psychology around forgiveness teaches that forgiveness is an act of self-love.

That it's something that we do for ourselves. But the Bible teaches that forgiveness is an act of kindness and grace towards others. It's a gift that we offer in love to other people, not for ourselves.

[33 : 56] Again, if we forgive others, that might make us feel better. which would be great. But I think if we do it, if we forgive others so that we'll feel better, if that's our motivation behind it, we're doing it wrong.

We want to forgive as God forgives. Ephesians 4.32 Ephesians 4.32 says this, And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

We want to forgive as God in Christ forgave us. God forgives us why? Let's read another verse.

Ephesians 2.4. This is a great one. I love this verse. Ephesians 2.4. But God, who is rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us.

that's a partial sentence. It goes on and on, but that's the part that I want to focus on is, why is God, why is he rich in mercy? What is the foundation of that?

[35 : 07] Why does he choose to be merciful? And it says why? Because of his great love with which he loved us. Will we feel better when we forgive others? Maybe.

Maybe. Maybe not. There might be occasions when we don't really feel better. It really depends on the situation, I think. But regardless of whether we feel better or not, forgiveness needs to be an act that serves someone else.

And when we do that, that makes us better people. It makes us more like God. And it makes the whole world a better place.

in talking about motivation, we just briefly brought up this verse, but I want to go ahead and open up to it. Matthew, if you have a Bible, go ahead and open up to Matthew 18.

Matthew 18. Oh, by the way, I forgot to do this.

[36 : 18] You know, as we go through this, forgiveness is kind of a weighty topic, and a lot of times there are lots of questions. Next week, I plan to just spend a short time, maybe half the time, talking about practicing forgiveness, but I wanted to maybe do some Q&A.;

And I have index cards, and I thought my kids could help pass those out. But if any questions come up today, either on stuff that we talked about last week, or things that we talked about today, just write them down on those index cards, and you can either hand them to me after the service, or put them in the offering box.

I think that's what we usually do. But I'll have my kids pass those out, just pass those down the rows. Because sometimes you come up with a question, and by the end of the service, you forgot.

So it's good to have something to write down while we're talking about it. Matthew 18, verse 21, this is a popular chapter, one that many people are familiar with.

Then Peter came to Jesus and said, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times? And Jesus said to him, I do not say to you up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

[37 : 42] And then he gets into this parable. Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.

And many have made the point that ten thousand talents is a lot of money. And I can't remember exactly what it is, but think in terms of lifetimes, multiple lifetimes of wages, which you might earn in like ten lifetimes.

That's the kind of money we're talking about. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold with his wife and children and all that he had and the payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him saying, Master, have patience with me and I will pay you all.

Then the master of the servant was moved with compassion, released him and forgave him the debt. But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, which is a much smaller amount, something that might take a week or two I think to pay off, grabbed him by the throat and said, Pay me what you owe.

So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him saying, Have patience with me and I will pay you all. And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved and came and told their master all that had been done.

[39 : 09] Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, You wicked servant, I forgave you all of that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have compassion on your fellow servant just as I have had pity on you?

And his master was angry and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due him. Then Jesus says this, So my heavenly father also will do to you if each of you from his heart does not forgive his brother his trespasses.

And that's quite a parable, quite sobering, if you will. But he's making the point, listen, forgiveness is not something that God owes us.

And so, in this case, he's teaching, listen, if somebody is not willing to forgive, then God can say, well, I'm not willing to forgive either.

this is a forgive or else type of thing.

[40 : 15] And this is part of how the law works, right? And so, we make in this church a distinction between law and grace and Jesus and his ministry before he shed his blood for us, especially.

He taught as one under the law. And the law is this. The law says, if you do these good things, I will bless you. And then the law also comes with the other side. If you don't do these good things or if you do these bad things, you will be cursed.

And the law is about doing deeds and getting rewards, either evil rewards or good rewards. And there is a threat to the law.

And threats do work sometimes, don't they? They work in law, right? Law and punishment. But I think what God found is that the law worked as an external force, but it didn't do anything to change people's inner hearts.

Love tends to be the best motivator. fear. And so a lot of people look to this verse and don't understand it correctly, this parable, this passage, that this is something that was taught under the law of Moses.

[41 : 41] It was a threat just like the rest of the law is. But as believers under grace, we should not look to this parable as how we live our lives.

motivation of fear may work in some cases, but for us, God wants our motivation to be what? To be love. We look and we see what God did for us, and love is poured out in our hearts.

And that love, out of that love, abounds forgiveness, mercy, and grace for others. I imagined in trying to think of an example for this, I imagine a couple gets married.

And, you know, for some people, they get married, and people have a past, right? I remember hearing a story like this, and I couldn't remember all the details, so I'm just kind of making up an example, but you could imagine that this might be the case.

A couple gets married, maybe somebody's, maybe the man, he's a new Christian or reformed in some way from, let's say, drug addiction or some other kind of immorality, infidelity, for example.

[42 : 58] And he really wants this marriage to work. This woman, even though she knows about his past, is willing to marry him, and he's so grateful, and he really wants the marriage to work.

And there is a fear, because of his past, that he might sin against her. He might screw up, he might mess up. And there are two attitudes that his new bride might have, and we can imagine.

The first is, listen, Buster, I know about the things you've done, and I just want you to know that if you screw up, we're done.

All right? I know about your past, and we're married. As long as you stay good, we're okay. But if you screw up, I'm gone.

I'm out of here. And you can imagine that's, that could be motivating, right? Could be very motivating. But on the other hand, we could imagine a different kind of attitude, where she says, listen, sweetheart, I married you, I know about your past, I love you, I decided to make a commitment to you, despite all the things in your past that you've expressed that you're sorry for.

[44 : 22] But I want you to know that if you do mess up, if you do make a mistake, if you come to me, I'm going to be willing to forgive you.

so that we can be reconciled. That's another motivating factor. That's a motivating factor of love.

Both are motivating. Which do you think is more motivating? Is it the fear? Is it the threat? Or is it the love? I think it's the latter.

And I think not only is it more motivating, but I think it will provide a more lasting motivation. Alright, we're going to move on to another aspect of forgiveness.

This one's probably the most controversial, but I'm going to start it off. We're going to look directly at what the Bible says. And see what you guys think.

[45 : 30] I'd like to do a little exercise. Okay? So, I'm going to, we're going to have a Bible verse, it's a short one, and it's going to be a fill in the blank. Okay? But I don't want anybody to fill in the blank out loud.

But in your mind, I'm going to say this Bible verse, and there will be a blank in there, and I want you just in your mind to fill in what goes in the blank. Okay? Here it is.

It's something Jesus said in the book of Luke. Jesus said, take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, blank him.

So, don't say anything out loud, but just think what, what is he, what would, what would go to fill in the blank. Now, let's open up our Bibles to that chapter.

Luke 17, verse 3. All right.

[46 : 45] Jesus said this, take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him. And if he repents, forgive him.

If your brother sins against you, rebuke him. And if he repents, forgive him. And this is actually, I think, the same as what we read before in Matthew 18, but this has a little bit of a different wording to it.

I think it's a little bit more concise. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day, returns to you saying, I repent, you shall forgive him. So, this topic is, is forgiveness something that should be conditioned?

Should there be a requirement before we forgive others? Or should we forgive just everyone automatically without any kind of condition? forgiveness? I think, I think based on Jesus' teaching here, that it is important that we have a reciprocation, if you will, when it comes to forgiveness.

forgiveness. That if we have concern, because part of forgiveness is a reconciliation of a relationship, and we'll talk about that in a second.

[48 : 15] But God, does he forgive, does he provide, does he ask for any kind of conditions or requirements when he forgives us?

Well, we talked about how when we're in Christ, there is no condition. But in order for us to be in Christ, right, he asks us to turn to him, to turn away from sin and toward him, that we humble ourselves.

And so, I think it is important in thinking about forgiving others that we look for that apology. That we look for that apology. If we truly love someone who has sinned against us, we will point them to repentance.

We will consider that their restoration to moral wholeness is more important than any need that we have to kind of release a hurt or a pain.

We should ask for an apology. In Luke here, it says, rebuke him. And a rebuke, that sounds severe, but a rebuke doesn't necessarily have to be severe, right?

[49 : 31] Sometimes a rebuke is, hey, you said something that really hurt my feelings. That's a rebuke. It's not a severe one. It's a gentle one.

In another place, it says, tell him his fault. That's the instruction. If your brother has sinned against you, tell him his fault.

There needs to be a reciprocal thing going on. I do think, though, that as Christians, because of what God did for us, because of his willingness to forgive us, we need to always be willing.

And that's what's taught here, right? With the 70 times 7. Is that like a, is that a ceiling on how many times we should forgive? What's 70 times 7? 490, right? We'll forgive somebody 490 times, and then that's it, right?

That's the ceiling that God gives us. No, that's not what he's communicating. What is he communicating? Every single time. No matter what they've done. We need to have this foundation of a willingness to forgive anyone.

[50 : 46] Because why? Does God have a ceiling? No, he doesn't have a ceiling. He's willing to forgive us as many times as we need it.

And has been throughout the history of the world. So, in considering this, there's, you know, forgiveness can get complicated sometimes, and sometimes I think we think, well, if we forgive somebody first, then maybe that will bring them to repentance.

And that's certainly possible. But sometimes it can have the opposite effect. Have you ever been in a situation where you tell somebody, well, I forgive you, and they're like, well, I didn't do anything.

Right? That could backfire in certain ways, especially if you haven't come to somebody and talked through the offense.

But I think just about a simple experience of raising kids, right? And teaching them forgiveness. That's something at a fundamental level we teach our kids.

[52 : 03] Right? We need to know how to forgive. But consider this. Let's say you've got two kids, Susie and Tommy. Brother and sister. Susie and Tommy. I try to use names of, well, especially not my kids.

I've used my kids as examples before. I got in big trouble. But let's say Susie, she just wails and hits her brother with her doll, you know, for whatever reason.

And he is totally upset and comes crying to his mommy. He says, Mommy, Susie hit me with her doll. And what does mom say?

Does she turn to Tommy, the one who was offended, the one who was hurt, and say, Tommy, you need to forgive your sister right now.

Is that what he says to her? Or she says to him? Sorry. No, no. As a mom, as a parent, you would turn to the one who offended and say, you know what?

[53 : 13] What do you need to do? You need to apologize. You need to apologize. You need to say you're sorry. Okay. I'm sorry.

Now, that's not a great apology. Sometimes we'll get what we can take, right? And we'll talk next week about what makes for a good apology. But, and then after the apology, then we turn to the offended, to the one who was hit, to the one who was hurt, and say, okay, it's time to do what?

It's time to forgive. I think we, we need to consider, with this whole idea of forgiving people, regardless of whether they, whether they repent, whether they apologize or not, I think it does have an impact on our Christian witness.

And how so? I think there are many people in the world who they look at Christians and those who just forgive everyone.

And not just, you know, again, I think we as Christians need to show the world that we are willing to forgive anyone for any offense, no matter what it is. Have that heart and willingness to forgive, to go to anybody and say, listen, and I've heard this as an example.

[54 : 43] Forgiveness is like a gift, right? It's a package, just like salvation is. It's a package that God, he wraps up and he gives it to us, but ultimately, it has to be opened.

For that forgiveness to ultimately do its work, it has to be opened. And in a human, or in our relationship with God, it's opened through our faith, our humility and faith and trust in him and what he did for us.

In our human interactions, it's through that apology. Forgiveness can be available, but that apology has to come for that forgiveness, that gift of forgiveness to be opened and really do its work.

But I think we can misrepresent God. And so many people, I think, think that Christianity, that God is somebody who will overlook their sins no matter what.

And so, they don't have to do anything. They don't have to turn to God in sorrow, in contriteness of heart, in humility. And they think, oh, well, God, he just forgives everybody automatically.

[55 : 53] And so, I don't have to worry about it. I can just live my life however I want. They don't realize that there's a seriousness. There's something that they need to do on their part. All right, last part.

reconciliation. Is reconciliation and forgiveness required? Or is reconciliation a required part of forgiveness? I think that's the intended end goal of forgiveness is reconciliation.

In Matthew 5, verse 23, and we can open up to that real quick. I'm running out of time, so we'll try to do this quickly. But Matthew 5, 23.

I'll just read it from here. Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go your way.

First, be reconciled to your brother, then come, and then offer your gift. This is a passage about forgiveness, but the whole concept is, what's the whole purpose?

[56 : 58] Reconciliation. Reconciliation. We want to be reconciled. We want to be reconciled to those who may have sinned against us. And then, Matthew 18 again, we'll look at, and Matthew chapter 18, we'll look at verse 15 through 17.

Moreover, if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. So, your brother sins against you.

We don't just, if we just forgive somebody in our hearts, there's something that's missing. There's something, there's a transaction that does not happen that is so important. But if we go to that person and say, listen, you did this and it offended me.

It hurt me in some way. And you need to try to get an agreement with that. Go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.

That's the first step, right? Just you and him. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. So, if he agrees, you know what, you're right. What I did was wrong. I mean, that's really for most of us as far as we need to get right.

[58 : 06] Then we can have forgiveness and reconciliation. And then he goes on and says, you know, bring somebody else and then ultimately bring the church. And we won't get into kind of what that means, but I think that's just get other Christians involved to help because if there isn't that reconciliation, reconciliation, it's so important that we need to get other people involved.

If they won't hear you, what's the other option? Well, just forget about it. I went to them privately. They wouldn't hear me, so I guess we just will have to stay separated.

We'll have to be at odds. But it was so important to God that the reconciliation happens that he says, bring somebody else along, somebody else who can help.

And if that other person can't help, find some Christian leaders who can help because that reconciliation is so, so important. So that, I think, teaches the priority and the urgency of forgiveness.

Don't just give up with one try. Bring in others if needed because reconciliation is that important. And ultimately, sometimes, reconciliation just doesn't happen.

[59 : 24] But we don't want that to be because we didn't try. We want to make sure that we did everything that we could. So, I'm going to end there.

There's lots of verses to talk about, but I thought, let's, next week, what I'd like to look at is very practically how can we forgive others?

How, not just can we forgive others, what steps do we take? How can we, what's the proper way to give an apology? Right? Another thing is, and this one is the hardest for me, what is a good way to ask for an apology.

That one's hard. I don't like asking for apologies. I like to just kind of, you know, just bear the weight of it. I could bear it. What about, are there times when we should just kind of overlook the wrongs done to us?

I think the Bible does teach that, that there are times when others hurt us in, I think, small ways, and I think it takes wisdom to decide. Are there things that we should just overlook?

[60 : 49] Should we bring up every small infraction? I don't think so, and the Bible talks about that. Sometimes we do need to overlook things, but how do you decide what those things are? And then also, sometimes it's hard to forgive, and what can we do to find the motivation that we need in order to forgive?

And then hopefully we'll have some time, because we ran out of time today, for some questions and answers if there's things that came up today, or whether it's questions or comments, and just talk through them and see if we can find the right answers.

I don't claim I have all the right answers, but I know the place we can go to to find them. And so if you have any questions, you can write those on those cards, any comments even, and we'll try to answer those next week when we talk about practicing forgiveness.

Also, a couple things to pitch. This is a book that I found, this is one of the most helpful books I've found on forgiveness. It's called Unpacking Forgiveness. And he goes through, I mean, it's just full of Bible.

Bible this and Bible that. And, you know, I don't think I have to say this, but with any book, right, you agree with everything? No, you don't agree with everything. But I think there's enough good content in here that it's definitely worth reading.

[62 : 09] Unpacking Forgiveness by Chris Bronze. And it can be a tough read. I mean, when it comes to the topic of forgiveness, like, he talks about some pretty heart-wrenching stories in there. You know, sins committed as well as heartwarming, you know, redemption and reconciliation.

So, the other thing I'd recommend when it comes to forgiveness is back here on the table, there's a series of CDs that Pastor Marv has done called Marriage on the Rock.

Has anybody listened to those here? A few? Yeah, really good. But there are, I think, like three CDs worth of content on this topic of offenses, forgiveness, apologies, and it really gets into the details.

I've listened to most of those and found it just so, so well done. It's in the context of marriage, but marriage is one of the relationships that I think God gave us to help grow in our other relationships, right?

Marriage is the most intimate one. It provides the most pleasure and the most pain in many of our lives, right? Because we're so close to one another. And so I think forgiveness, especially in marriage, forgiveness and repentance and all those things are most important in marriage.

[63 : 40] But those things that we learn in the context of marriage can also provide help and direction in other things as well, in other relationships.

So, well, I'll end there and we'll pick this up next week. So let's pray. Father, you loved us so much.

Your heart of mercy is so amazing. You loved us more than we can even imagine. you know, we think about some noble person who would die for an innocent person, for, let's say, an innocent child.

But you say, but what you did is when we were dead in our trespasses and sin, you died for us. And there is no act of mercy, no act of love that could be greater than that.

we ask right now, Father, that you would do a work in us. If there are opportunities that have come to mind, situations that have come to mind where we might need to, whether it's grant forgiveness, whether it's ask for an apology, whether it's give an apology, that you would work in hearts today to look for and find that reconciliation that's needed so that we, as the body of Christ, might live in unity and love for one another, reflecting the love that you have for us and that we can have for you.

[65 : 18] Thank you for your word that instructs us in all things. In Jesus' name, amen.