

Ephesians

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[0 : 00] I think we can consider chapter 4 as having concluded unless you have other comments or questions you'd like to raise about it. We simply ended on the importance of forgiveness.

We talked a little bit about possessing an attitude of forgiveness, even though we may not have an opportunity to actually extend forgiveness.

And I trust that I haven't sliced this too thin, but I made a distinction between being able to forgive someone and being willing to forgive them as opposed to actually doing it.

And you'll recall that I posited the proposition that because an offense, that is something that is committed in word or deed to another person, the offense and the offended always includes a two-person transaction.

There is the offended one and there is the offender. And that is a dual relationship. And in order for forgiveness to actually be realized or extended, there needs to be a dual relationship with that as well.

[1 : 22] So that means there needs to be an apology rendered before forgiveness can be extended. This means, of course, that there may not be an apology rendered because the one who committed the offense may not recognize it as such.

And therefore, they are not prone to apologize. Their attitude might be, Well, what do I have to apologize for? I didn't do anything wrong. Yet, that does not resolve the hurt that is in the heart and mind of the one offended.

So, while we would like to be able to extend forgiveness to them, it is dependent upon their requesting it. And if they do not request it, we cannot extend it.

My point is simply this. You cannot forgive someone who refuses to recognize that they have committed an offense. I know the typical Christian position is this.

Well, you should forgive them anyway. My point is, you can't do that. You can have, and you should have, an attitude, a desire, a willingness, even an eagerness to forgive.

[2 : 40] So that if they would express a desire and an apology, you would gladly forgive immediately. But my point is, you cannot do that.

For they recognize there is no offense committed. And I base that on the fact that the offense and the offender is a two-person proposition. There is an interchange there.

And the apology and the forgiveness must also be the same two-person proposition. So, unless that circle is complete, it just cannot be done.

That means that forgiveness may be just hanging in limbo and may never actually be realized. Because you see, the goal, the objective is reconciliation.

The objective is the patching, the fixing, the mending of the relationship. So that the two parties are brought back to the closeness that they enjoy before the offense occurred.

[3 : 46] Because what an offense always creates is a distancing between the offender and the offended. And that distancing results in a coolness, a withdrawal from the one who committed the offense because the hurt that is there.

And if that hurt and that offense is not resolved, then the hurt morphs into bitterness.

And the bitterness begins eating away on the inside. So, what needs to be done with all offenses and offenders is reconciliation.

There needs to be an apology, recognition that one has offended, and an apology given, and forgiveness extended. And then, your friends again, reconciliation has occurred.

If it's a husband and wife situation, as is often the case, then the most fun part of the relationship begins. And that's the kissing and making up. But that's got to be the goal, the reconciliation.

[5 : 00] And if there is no reconciliation, the distancing, the coolness remains. The great difficulty with human nature is that not merely are there offenses committed one to another.

That's not the real problem. Because offenses and offending is just part of our humanity. The problem is in the offense unreconciled.

That's the problem. It is unreconciled offenses that create distancing. And sometimes these offenses are just piled up, one on top of another, without ever apology being given.

You all know as well as I do, some people who have never apologized for anything, ever. Because they see themselves as never having been in the wrong about anything.

So, apology for them is just out of the question. They never apologize for anything. They never admit that they're wrong about anything. And what that does is it creates, if it's a husband and wife situation, it creates an emotional barrier, a distancing between the people.

[6 : 23] They start to grow apart. And if it intensifies, the apartness increases more and more.

And not only does it result in an emotional distancing and withdrawing one from another, but if it is not resolved, it can actually progress into a physical distancing.

They no longer sleep together. Sometimes they no longer live together. It's called a separation. Or in an extreme case, it's a divorce.

And all human conflicts, all human conflicts begin with an offense. An offended one and an offender.

This is true the world over. It's true of nations. Not just people in a marriage. It's true of problems that exist in a neighborhood.

[7 : 33] Where neighbors are feuding and fussing and fighting. And where there is bad feelings between them. It exists in schools. It exists in workplaces. We all know this thing, they've even developed a term for it now.

It's called going postal. Where somebody, and I don't know what it is about the U.S. post office, but statistics tell us that there is something taking place in some of these post offices.

Where somebody comes in with an automatic weapon and summarily dispatches four or five people, co-workers with whom they have a grudge, and they're always on the receiving end of an offense.

And those offenses were never resolved, never apologies given, just hard feelings build up and accumulate, and finally somebody goes over the edge.

And they bring in a weapon and they start shooting people. We've seen this happen a number of times over the last five or six years. In schools, there's a big problem now called bullying, where kids begin making fun of other kids.

[8 : 50] One of the most tragic things that I have ever seen was a picture of a little girl in the newspaper, the front page of the newspaper.

I think it was yesterday's paper, Springfield paper. This little girl who was about 12 years of age, right here in our community, and she suffered from a very rare brain situation that required surgery on her brain.

And when the surgeon accomplished the operation, it left this little girl with a distorted look on her mouth.

It just made her mouth crooked, you know, abnormal, so you could just glance at it and tell what's wrong with her. And this girl was suffering from a rare kind of brain cancer for which she had the surgery.

And when she went back to school, apparently some thought it was a very funny thing. Some thought it was something to be made fun of.

[10 : 01] And they ridiculed and teased her about it. You can imagine this. You know, it is difficult sometimes to imagine that children can be brutal.

Children can really injure one another. And this little girl was so driven to despair.

Twelve years of age. She took her own life. And I just cannot begin to imagine what her parents are going through, what those children who were part of that group that ridiculed and made fun of her, what they must be feeling by way of guilt.

And you know, they can't apologize to her. They can be sorry for what they did, but she isn't here to receive their apology. She's gone.

And I realize as well as you do that suicide has been called a permanent solution to a temporary problem. And it is never an acceptable out.

[11 : 13] But sometimes, when human beings get so overwhelmed with anguish and suffering and pain, they feel they have no option but to remove themselves from the scene.

And it's all because of unresolved offenses. This is the most powerful negative that exists in the human race. And it began way back in Genesis 3 when the first offender was Adam and Eve and the offended party was the creator.

And the human race was off and running. And that's where we are to this day. Only with multiplied billions of people, we have multiplied billions of offenses, offenders, and offended.

And keep in mind, guys, this is the whole basis of human conflict. Anytime somebody is hurt, injured by another, it's always because somebody said something that hurt them or did something that hurt them.

And I know people say things like, well, it didn't hurt me. It just made me mad. Who are you kidding? It did too hurt.

[12 : 38] It hurt and made you mad. It did both. And usually, think about this, usually, the reason we offend somebody by saying something that we know will hurt them or wound them is because that's the intended goal.

We wanted to hurt them. That's why we said what we did. We wanted to hurt them. That's why we did what we did. So, this is a big, big item.

And it is the basis of all human conflict. So, if we can consider chapter 4 as completed, be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.

And let me just add one more thing. Then I'll take your Q&A.; I've heard this before and you probably have too. I just can't forgive them.

The hurt is too deep. The wound is too deep. I just don't have the ability to forgive them. And my response to that is, you do too.

[14 : 02] You're just telling yourself that you don't. You can forgive. You do not want to forgive.

Because once you forgive, you have to let it go. Then, you can no longer savor it. You can no longer taste it. You can no longer resurrect it and relive it.

You've got to dismiss it. And you don't want to do that. You want to hold them hostage. This is part of the deceitfulness of the human heart, which is desperately wicked.

Who can know it? This is what Jeremiah is talking about. So, to say, I would like to forgive them, but I just can't because they hurt me too deeply.

Well, your volition comes into play. And fellas, forgiveness, here's a big item, forgiveness, and being willing to extend it, is not a matter of the emotions.

[15 : 07] It's not a matter of how you feel about it. It is a matter of the will. It's a matter of the volition. We say we cannot forgive them, but in reality we are saying I will not forgive them.

It is a matter of the will, not of the feelings. And it's very important to know because, look, you are not in charge of your feelings.

Very often things come into our life that make us feel a certain way and you're not in command of those feelings. Your feelings are just there as an automatic response to whatever it is that happens.

But you are in command of your volition. You are in command of your will. You may choose to forgive or not forgive, but let's not have any of this I can't forgive.

All we need is a refreshment of the perspective. Even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.

[16 : 16] And if I refuse to forgive someone who offended me, who asked for my forgiveness, what I am saying is, in effect, is the wrong that you committed against me is greater than the wrong that has been committed against God.

When you put it in that perspective, that's absolute nonsense. Besides, today, we are the offended. Tomorrow, we may be the offender.

It works that way. So we need to recognize this coming and going both ways. We are all capable of offending and being offended.

And it just comes automatic to us. It's part of the human psyche. Frank? That don't work very well on the work place. If you're on the factory floor and some guy has done something to you, and you walk up to him and say, you know, you did this and this and this to me, but I'm going to forgive you.

That guy's going to punch you in the nose. He's going to laugh at you. Exactly. Well, what he's done is he has increased the offense then. Yes. You know? But you can't do nothing about it.

[17 : 33] Well, okay, so what do you think about it? Did everybody hear Frank's? Yeah. Okay, what do you think about this? It builds and it builds and it builds and it always gets worse.

Okay. And then it happens like down the post office. Okay. It gets to a point where somebody shoots somebody. Well, if you listen to the street, the street will tell you that's the way you're a man. You're tough like that.

Yeah. And it's not being a man, but that's what the world can say to many men. The world can be a baddest weakness. Right. Well, are we called upon to merely be like other men, or are we called upon to represent our Lord Jesus Christ who when he was reviled, reviled not again.

And when he was cursed, he did not curse in return. And this is the idea of a humble spirit that recognizes that we are not superior to our Lord and we are to respond in kind the way he responded whether or not men recognize it or appreciate it.

After all, we are not offering apology or forgiveness because that's what people expect. Sometimes people expect what Frank is talking about.

[18 : 58] They expect you to just give it back. But all that does is exacerbate the situation. It intensifies. And would it not be a more manly thing for somebody to take responsibility in this?

And let me make this point, fellas, because this is so very important. Apology is not a sign of weakness.

It's a sign of strength. I might have shared this with you before, but if I did, it bears repetition. And if I didn't, you'll hear it for the first time. One of my favorite movie star heroes, John Wayne, the Duke.

I haven't seen all of his movies, but I've seen most of them. And I'll never forget a scene in *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, and John Wayne was a cavalry officer, senior cavalry officer, like a colonel.

And one of his young lieutenants came up to him to give a report in connection with some responsibility that he was to have carried out. And Colonel John Wayne asked him, did you do thus and so and thus and so?

[20 : 20] And the young man replied, no, sir, I apologize, I'm sorry, I wasn't, don't apologize, mister. It's a sign of weakness.

I just wonder how many men actually picked up on that. Rendering an apology when somebody is entitled to an apology is not a sign of weakness.

Fellas, it is a sign of strength. Let me tell you something. Weak men, weak men do not apologize.

Their ego can't handle it. Because their ego demands that they be right. And if you're right, what do you have to apologize for?

Nothing. So you don't apologize. And that's where a whole lot of people are coming from. Even a lot of Christian men see that. A lot of Christian men would rather take a beating than they would to go to their wife and say, Honey, when I said what I did the other day, blah, blah, blah, I know it really hurt you and you did not deserve that and I was out of line and I give anything if I could do that over again and take it back.

[21 : 47] I am so sorry I hurt you the way I did. Please forgive me. Fellas, nothing gets to a woman's heart like that.

That's nothing but an expression of honest manliness and for us to put on that hard shell and dig in our heels as it were and I won't apologize because when we apologize it is an admission of wrong it makes us look bad to ourselves makes us feel bad and it makes us look weak to others.

Let me tell you something. An apology that is well rendered is so rare today that people sit up and take notice to it.

It is a real act of bravery to assume responsibility for your actions and say this is what I did this is what I said I was completely unjustified in doing that my bad I'm sorry please forgive me that's a rare commodity and frankly it is a whole lot more needed today than it has ever been yeah Frank's comment reminds me of a letter that after John's assassination Jackie Kennedy who was paraphrasing she said anybody can start a war it takes a big minute not to yeah well I rest my case yeah precisely thank you other thoughts anybody Dan well you know I went through something that not affected me but affected my family and

I think it's kind of a male instinct there you want to protect your family sure so I I made this attempt to do what you know and like he said he said do the thing and all it did is I took a risk doing it well of course there's a risk there's a risk and it didn't solve you know and I think it seems to say you can't control what others do you can only control what you do right but that's easier sin to die well it apologizing is one thing and extracting a willing forgiveness from the other party is something else you have no control over their willingness to forgive you only have control over your willingness to apologize and one thing that one thing that makes it a lot easier for someone who has been offended to forgive the offender in fact

[25 : 02] I think the principal thing that makes it easier for them to forgive is if they know that you the offender understand how deeply and how badly you have hurt them and the only way that they can know that you know is if you are precise about the offense don't try to throw it under a general blanket like if I said anything to offend you I'm sorry okay that does not cut it that does not cut it or if I did anything to offend you or upset you I'm sorry okay that fellas that is an apology on the cheap and why would you not be willing to spell out what you did I'll tell you why you wouldn't be willing because to do so is painful to you you've got to relive the thing own up to it take responsibility for it and as you do that you feel your ego is shrinking right before your eyes and you want to preserve that ego pump it up protect it so we keep our apologies nice and general if I did anything in other words throw this blanket over okay and you know what they're looking for especially if it is your wife fellas

I hate to tell you this but women are into details they like details if I did anything oh what did you do well you know you know and you know it was supposed to cover the waterfront no you need to spell out what you did after all admitting it ought to be easier than doing it but it isn't because when we do it it is our anger or our frustration that is speaking and when we refuse to spell it out it is the protection of our ego that we are trying to maintain at all costs I'll tell you the male ego and I

I've done enough marital counseling over the last 50 years to know that women have an ego too they're not devoid of an ego but let me tell you something apart from very few exceptions there is no feminine ego that can begin to compete with that of the male ego we've got a corner on it and one reason is because we like to think of ourselves as can do and in charge guys and in control and in command and when we fly off the coop or lose it or whatever that's damaging to our psyche okay Kevin one thing I like in life in 57 years that far as apologies is concerned when it's somebody that ain't close to you or somebody that is really not a person it don't really mean nothing but when it's somebody of your own household somebody that you really you know it can take an effect upon your emotions not just the average person going to tick you off a lot of people they're going to say what they want to say to me don't make no difference to me but when somebody like my mother or father sister somebody is close to you then emotions begin to take back you really don't want to apologize because you feel within yourself that either they knew better anybody agree with me that they knew better they knew not to do nothing like but when we speak we're supposed to speak as the oracle of

God and speaking as an oracle of God apology is necessary because there's going to be somewhere in life that you're going to have to apologize for something then you say well what are you talking about what do you really mean by that if the Lord apologized what makes you think that you don't have to apologize all that stuff that Saul did all that stuff that Saul did listen to this this is the last verse in first Samuel the 15th chapter and the 35th verse and I hope it cleans to your heart and it says Samuel came no more to see Saul because God had rebuked him until the day of his death nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul and listen to this and the

Lord repented can I say that again the Lord our Lord repented because he had made Saul king of Israel God said Lord have mercy why did I what was I thinking why did I make Saul the king of Israel why did I do that I am so sorry is that what this is saying well that's what it seems to be saying but there's another verse where the Lord said I am the Lord I change not therefore you sons of Jacob are not destroyed so from the standpoint of human communication I don't think there was any other way that God could express to to Samuel in a way that

[31 : 36] Samuel could understand other than bringing it down and putting himself in a class like among humans and using a human expression and I think that's exactly what he did because he felt the same way about the six churches in the book of revelations at the end about the six churches all of them was disobedient all but the church in Philadelphia yeah that's right that's right yes well yeah okay I can I can only say no I can only say I really commend their attitude of forgiveness I think that takes a lot of spiritual moxie to be able to do that and a lot of people wouldn't even consider it you know and I think

I don't think that the forgiveness thing is able to be completed because he's not taking any responsibility but these dear people have put themselves in the right position in expressing their attitude of forgiveness and I don't have any doubt at all what they feel that they have forgiven and they want to forgive but I still believe that the exchange is necessary for this young man Dylan Ruth to be able and I you know it's hard to hold out much hope for this but it would be a wonderful thing if he would really see the light and be able to honestly apologize for what he did but whether there's whether there's some actual mental illness there I don't know well it would seem it would seem that there is but who knows I don't know

I just don't know but the attitude of the people to be willing to forgive and having extended forgiveness we have a similar situation in the Amish community not terribly long ago where I think it was some Amish children were murdered in one of their school rooms and the Amish community kind of rose up if you will in a mass forgiveness and I think that attitude that expression is as commendable as it can possibly be and it shows the real condition of their heart a willingness to forgive but again the cycle cannot be completed and their forgiveness is I'm not saying their forgiveness isn't worth anything it's worth a lot and it unbinds them for one thing and it expresses a godly attitude but still in order for you see what's the goal the goal is reconciliation the goal is reconciliation and that's why apology and forgiveness are both needed to affect that reconciliation where they can be brought back together like they're supposed to be that's that's the goal yes so let me get another another perspective now Jesus in the garden of the syphilis when he was in the garden of the syphilis he got slain and he said

Lord if there's any way any way that this cup can be taken from me please let it be so but his next words was not my will but your will be done so when you say when he repented in his for this because he already knew that it was any of us we wouldn't want that cup did Jesus ever want that cup get up on that cross and be beaten like that but he repented and said not my will but your will be done so that's repentance and reconciliation that's right that's right amen actually there was a kind of there was a transaction there and when he said if there is any way that this cup can pass from me what he was doing then was expressing his will his preference his desire and then if you use the word repent there in that he changed his mind he reversed himself and that was the meaning of nevertheless that's right nevertheless not my will powerful maybe the most powerful example of all yes often attorneys will discourage apologies because that admits guilt oh yeah absolutely absolutely in hospitals you know loved ones die because of human mistakes it's not often but it does yeah quite often if the hospital acknowledges the mistake and addresses the family with it there will be fewer lawsuits there will still be some lawsuits oh sure but quite often the family just wants it out yeah yeah yeah

I remember I very well remember because it's in my present family now but many of you remember Dave Weinbrenner and Dave had a pacemaker defib unit installed in his chest and he'd had ongoing heart trouble for several years and a couple of bypasses over the years a couple of heart attacks and he had this device placed in him and when that thing when the heart rhythm got out of sync that thing would kick in to start and he said it's just like being kicked in the chest by a mule and the pain is incredible and he experienced that and it happened a number of times while he was still at home and of course he was taken to the hospital to the ER right away and this thing every couple of minutes would go off again and Dave was actually asking the

[38 : 23] Lord to take him he just really wanted to die the pain was incredible and when they got to the hospital to the ER they were familiar with his case because he was well known there in his situation and everything and what was required to turn that device off was a magnet a special magnet that was made particularly for that purpose and no one in the ER could find that magnet they searched high and low could not find the magnet to disengage that thing and every couple of minutes it would go off again and I do not recall the exact number I think it was twenty some jolts that he got and when the whole thing was over and the crisis was over and finally they were able to get the thing turned off there were profuse apologies on the part of the staff and everyone and I would not be a bit surprised but what they did not expect a massive lawsuit to be filed and I told

Marie and Dave since that I had no doubt that had they wanted to sue for you know suffering and pain and everything else he would have had a dozen lawyers stand in line to take that case because it would be a huge settlement with a nice slice of the profit for the lawyer and yet they did not feel compelled to their credit to even threaten to sue much less to do it because they knew that it was not intentional it was carelessness on their part it was unprofessional but it was not intentional it was just a human error thing and they were big enough to overlook it but there is a perfect example of what you were saying about the legal response is of course you never admit anything and no matter what you're charged with the plea is automatically not guilty and I'll never forget reading the book

Born Again by Chuck Colson came out several years ago he had been subpoenaed and charged and indicted and he was going to have to go to trial for the Watergate thing that he was involved in and he hired this top flight Jewish lawyer criminal lawyer in New York City by the name of Shapiro and they were planning their strategy and the lawyer said you know as they were getting together and planning to go into the courtroom he says now the judge is going to ask you how you plead and you're going to plead not guilty and Colson said oh well no I'm going to plead guilty and the lawyer said what well yes I'm going to plead guilty well you can't do that why would you plead guilty and he said because I am

I am guilty I'm guilty of the charge and the lawyer as much as said well that's besides the point that's got nothing to do with anything you plead not and he entered of course a plea of guilty and he did time he served time in prison for it but it just goes to show you fellas there isn't anything there isn't anything that takes the place of truth and honesty and it doesn't matter if it doesn't play well with the crowd it's still the best policy and for the believer in Jesus Christ truth and honesty is the only policy even if it hurts you and God will eventually vindicate because he is a God of truth and honesty