

# The Danger of Unforgiveness

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Preacher: Donnie Griggs

[ 0 : 00 ] All right, so jumping back into 2 Corinthians. Hey, if you're just joining us, you can go back and listen to previous sermons or watch them online or on the app. Let me just do a real high-level introduction to this letter, 2 Corinthians.

Some of you maybe never even opened a Bible before. That's okay. We're really glad you're here. So 2 Corinthians is a letter written to a church in a place called Corinth by a guy named Paul. And it's called 2 Corinthians because in the Bible we have a 1 Corinthians. And these are two different letters, right? 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians. But if you try to actually go and read 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians, you will scratch your head a lot because you'll be like, something doesn't add up here.

And that's because there weren't just two letters from Paul to the church in Corinth. There were likely five, at least four letters. We're just missing some of those letters.

And so in 1 Corinthians, Paul mentions a previous letter that he wrote to them. So we know that our 1 Corinthians was actually the second letter to the church in Corinth.

[ 1 : 05 ] So there's a first letter Paul wrote, and then there's the second letter, which is our 1 Corinthians. I know this is crazy. I should have a chart, but it's helpful context for you, all right? So there's a letter that we don't have.

Then there's this second letter that we have called 1 Corinthians. And then there's a third letter that Paul writes, and that is a severe letter Paul writes out of, he says, much affliction and anguish and with many tears.

We're going to get into that one. We'll get into the passage where he talks about that. But that third letter we don't have either. But it was apparently a doozy. And so Paul wrote this severe letter to them.

And then he writes a fourth and kind of maybe even the fifth letter. And those fourth and fifth letters got combined into our 2 Corinthians. So there's maybe five total. We've got the second one, and we've got the fourth slash fifth one.

We don't have the first and third. And so we're missing some pieces is the point. So if you go read 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, you're going to be like, I don't know, but that doesn't make sense. What's he talking about? Who's he talking about? What does that mean? We're missing some of the dialogue.

[ 2 : 04 ] We don't have any of their dialogue either. We don't know what they wrote back to him, if they wrote back to him. So all that stuff there, it can make things a little complicated. And so those corresponding pieces are necessary that we're missing.

But the context here is Paul's addressing in this letter that we call 2 Corinthians, he's addressing some serious fractures of relationship and trust. The church has been split in two.

One group is really for Paul and defending him, and the other group are questioning his authority and his ability. And then you've got a group of these people that are kind of known by Paul as false apostles that have come in trying to cause trouble and strained relationships.

The distance didn't help either. And they didn't have phones. He couldn't just pick up a phone and call them or write them an email or shoot them a text or jump on social media. So Paul writes them a letter.

There's a major fracturing of trust in relationship, relationship, and there's pain, and there's all this stuff. And Paul writes them a letter. And so I just want to say, I think if we could admit, we normally skip this kind of stuff.

[ 3 : 08 ] Like if you've ever actually read 2 Corinthians, and I won't ask for a show of hands because I don't want to encourage you to lie in church and you probably feel pressure to. But like if

you've ever read like 2 Corinthians, you've probably seen some of this like relational stuff.

You're like, oh my gosh, this feels like none of my business. Who even understands what's going on here? Where is something I can use, right? And, you know, that can be sort of a natural response to this.

But I want to push us past that to say this is God's word. And it is alive and it's active and it has things to say to us. And so God, we ask you right now that you would help us to hear and to see what you are saying through your word.

Amen. So they're disappointed in Paul. He didn't visit them. He didn't live up to what they expected. He's not as impressive as these other guys. There's all this stuff. Again, it feels like a dramatic fight that is happening between two people.

You ever like had that happen where like two people were at it, each other, and you're like, I don't want to hear this. It's like in a restaurant or something. You're like, none of my business. Sort of feels like that. But again, this is in the Bible.

[ 4 : 16 ] And I think it's incredible that it's here because it's not just showing us what's happening between Paul and the Corinthians. I think the passage we're going to look today shows us a mandate for forgiveness.

Maybe you've been in a relationship before where you were really misunderstood. Things got painful to the point where you couldn't talk face to face anymore. Now you're reverting to some kind of written form of communication.

Maybe it is a letter. Maybe it was an email. Maybe it was a text. And no matter what you do, you just keep getting more misunderstood. You end up being falsely accused of motives and things you never did or even meant that they twist things.

And maybe you've been in situations like that. It was just easy. You just shake it off or unfriend them or whatever. But maybe, you know, for you, it was involving a relationship that was really important to you.

Maybe that scenario happened, but it happened with a best friend. Or it happened with a child, maybe even an adult child. Or maybe it happened to a spouse or maybe even a parent.

[ 5 : 19 ] That's the kind of scenario we find ourselves in here with Paul and the Corinthians. And if that's you or someone you know, well, this sermon's for you. And I hope we can give you some hope here and some handles for forgiveness.

A point of clarity before we jump in. And sorry for all the, like, intro, but this stuff's important. There is a difference between a disappointing relationship and a destructive or harmful relationship.

And I've been in ministry long enough to know that us Christians, sometimes we miss this. And so sometimes folks are in very harmful, destructive, abusive relationships. They hear a talk on forgiveness and go, yeah, you're right.

You know, I really should allow myself to continue being abused. We want to say that's not what this passage says. That's not what scripture says. That's not what we're saying. An abusive relationship, you know, needs to be reported.

It needs to be dealt with. And so if you're in danger in any way physically or emotionally or in a relationship, you need to get help. And that might include reporting to the authorities.

[ 6 : 23 ] It might include telling a pastor. It might include talking to some safe people in your life. That does not mean that you're not forgiving. You can forgive someone and not trust them at the same time.

You can forgive someone and just deem them not safe at the same time. God forgives us, but he allows us to face the consequences of our actions. You can forgive someone and they can face the consequences of their actions.

So, again, I want to just say that before we even jump in here because sometimes the enemy gets it right in that way. And someone who's in a very dangerous situation starts hearing the wrong message. Like we're encouraging you to stay in some kind of dangerous, that would not be the case.

And so report it, get help, come to us if we can help you. So that's just a clarification. All right, so jumping into this crazy little deal. We're going to read 2 Corinthians 1, picking up in verse 23.

Paul says, But I call God to witness against me. It was to spare you that I refrain from coming again to Corinth. He's like, this is why I didn't come to you. You're all upset because I didn't visit you. It was to spare you.

[ 7 : 29 ] Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, for you to stand firm in your faith. I made up my mind not to make another painful visit to you. If I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I've pained?

I wrote as I did, so that when I came I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice. I felt sure of all of you that my joy would be the joy of you all.

I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart. So he's saying that painful, severe letter. Yeah, I wasn't just ranting and raving. I was deeply, emotionally impacted by this.

It was with many tears that I wrote this letter. Not to cause you pain, but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you. Now if anyone's caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure not only, sorry, but in some measure not to put it too severely, to you all.

For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough. So you rather turn to forgive and comfort him or he may become overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I beg you to reaffirm your love for him.

[ 8 : 33 ] So what's happened is this group in Corinth have turned on an individual and Paul is saying enough's enough. This is why I wrote that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything. Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive.

Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I've forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ so that we would not be outwitted by Satan for we are not ignorant of his designs.

So again, Paul's concern is that they're acting in a way that's unforgiving towards someone and he's jumping in. And he's not flipping about it like, you know, hey guys, here's a good idea. Maybe, you know, think about it, pray about it.

No, he's saying, God, witness against me. I'm begging you. This guy is going to become overwhelmed with excessive sorrow. There's a lot of like, Paul's taking this very seriously.

And I think just the obvious sort of thing we can miss, it's important, you know, when we think about the subject of forgiveness or unforgiveness, it's just we see this fleshed out here that choosing to forgive when you're really hurt, well, it's hard.

[ 9 : 33 ] I know it sounds like super easy and obvious, but like it's right there. Like, it's hard when you're really hurt to forgive. It's not hard when like it's a silly little thing. Oh, I'm a very forgiving person.

Yeah, but wait till you get really hurt and then find out how forgiving you are. It's far easier than to just stew on something or we have different styles. Maybe your approach is to sweep it under the rug and time will heal it.

No, it won't. It'll just make it worse. So Paul here is choosing to do a really hard thing and we see it was hard. And, you know, again, there's so much context going on here that it's easy to miss.

But Paul, the way he lowers himself in this passage, the way he makes himself look weak, he describes himself as someone who's writing a letter that he's anguishing over and he's weeping. He's like pouring tears out of his eyes when he's writing this letter. I mean, this is like lost on us a little bit, but like he is lowering himself down. He is admitting that this letter caused him anguish and caused him weeping.

[ 10 : 31 ] And the big deal is that he's doing this to an audience of people, the Corinthians, who look down their noses at weakness. Like their whole accusations against Paul were how weak he was, how inferior he was.

And now he's in a display of strength. Paul comes and he lowers himself. The Corinthian church, they were obsessed with impressive guest speakers, right?

You're clearly not obsessed with that, hence the reason I'm here today. But this was a big deal for them. It comes up again and again in the letters that we do have. In 1 Corinthians 3, they've got this whole deal where like some follow Paul and some follow Apollos.

And they're like picking sides on like who's going to be their apostle. They're obsessed with this stuff. And in 2 Corinthians 11, we hear about this group of, they quote, quote, sorry, quote, super apostles. And these are people who, they were really impressive.

In fact, they had letters of recommendation they could show. And in a sense, it was like, well, Paul, where's your letter of recommendation? You know, they were obsessed with this guest speaking kind of celebrity thing.

[ 11 : 32 ] And they criticized Paul. His teaching wasn't right. His delivery wasn't right. His style wasn't right. Even his appearance was criticized. Then they would go on to criticize his motives. How hurtful must that have been for Paul?

He didn't just ditch them. In spite of all the pain they'd caused him, despite knowing how they may look down at him, Paul gets low. He humbles himself.

Because Paul doesn't see himself as a celebrity. He sees himself as a servant. He actually says that in verse 24. We don't want to lord it over you, over your faith. We want to work with you for your joy.

And that's the point he brings up in 1 Corinthians 3, too. He says, what's Apollos? What's Paul? We're just servants. Paul's like, my role here is not a celebrity with a bruised ego. You know, if that's what was driving Paul, this like, you know, you guys don't think highly enough of me.

He wouldn't have written this painful, you know, hard, anguished letter with emotion. He would have showed up, brought his best sermon, preached his guts out, dropped the mic, and been like, deuces. See you guys on the other side. He's committed to their good.

[12:39] But like, what we see here is evidence that like, man, this is hard work. He's not concerned with him looking good. He's concerned with him forgiving. But why? What's the big deal about not forgiving someone?

I mean, is it, in the grand scheme of things, is it that big a deal? Well, it is a big deal. And we see here in verse 10 and 11 how big of a deal it is. He says, so that, this is a big deal for us, so that we would not be outwitted by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his design.

So outwitted, Satan, ignorant. So choosing to forgive when you've been really hurt is hard. But choosing not to forgive is really foolish and dangerous. It's really foolish and it's really dangerous. This is not a flattering picture here. This is someone who chooses not to forgive in this passage. He says, you'll be outwitted. And that means to be taken advantage of. It means to be duped. It means to be conned.

I won't ask for a show of hands, but if you've ever, you know, supported a Nigerian prince who sent you an email saying that he just needed a certain amount of money because his family's inheritance. Like, you got conned, right?

[13:48] That's the language here. It's not flattering. You don't want to brag about it. Like, hey, guys, guess what? I sent \$10,000 to a dude on the internet. Turns out I was wrong.

Like, it's stuff you never want anybody to know. It's not flattering to be outwitted. And then he says, we're not ignorant. That just means what you think it means. We're not stupid.

We don't lack knowledge. Paul's saying here to not forgive, it betrays ignorance. And it shows that you're someone who's up for being conned, who's up for being duped, who's up for being taken advantage of.

But the real kicker is who you're being outwitted by. It's not who you think. It's not the one who has the grievance against you or you have the grievance against. He says here, the one who wants to con you, outwit you, dupe you, take advantage of you is Satan.

And then he says, we're not ignorant to his designs. Right? His designs. What are those designs? Well, 1 Peter 5, 8, we read this.

[14:50] Be sober-minded. Be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, he prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Satan is not someone you want to get outwitted by.

Satan's more dangerous than some internet scammer. Like, you don't want to be devoured by him. The image here is so provocative. And again, their culture would have been a culture where lions, you know, prowling around.

This was a possibility. So imagine, for us, it might be like a bull shark, you know, swimming kind of like in the distance or something. It would have terrified them, this imagery.

Choosing not to forgive, according to this, is choosing to essentially mistake the roars of a hungry lion as a friendly invitation to go play in the dark.

You think you're just giving someone what they deserve. When you choose not to forgive, you betray your ignorance. You say yes to being conned, but you allow yourself to be outwitted by an adversary who wants to devour you.

[15:54] So yeah, forgiveness is hard. Unforgiveness is really foolish and really dangerous. And that should be enough for all of us just to choose to say, yes, we want to forgive. But there's more going on here than just self-preservation.

There's also this idea of obedience as followers of Jesus. Paul mentions obedience in verse 9 and 10. He says, I wanted to test you to know whether you're obedient in everything. He's talking about obedient to him.

And they should have listened to Paul. I mean, Paul was an apostle. He was a father to them, a spiritual father to them. God had put Paul in their life to direct them, to guide them. They should have listened to Paul and said, Paul, you're in it for our good.

These other guys with all their fancy letters of recommendation, they got nothing on you. You really care about us, Paul. We'll listen. But essentially the ball was in their court. They didn't have to listen to Paul. They had the freedom not to listen to Paul.

But they weren't totally free and neither are we. As followers of Jesus, we're not free in the sense that we can do whatever we want. So it's hard, but it's dangerous not to forgive.

[16:58] And in addition to that, choosing to forgive isn't optional for followers of Jesus. Again, consider the context here. It can sound like, if you read that, like Paul is asking them to forgive some random person that has nothing to do with him.

Paul is begging them to forgive an individual so it doesn't become overcome with excessive sorrow. But that person apparently is the guy who led the charge against Paul himself. That's the guy who's on the chopping block.

That's the guy who the whole community seems to have turned against. And the majority, Paul says, is piled up against this guy, will not forgive him. He's going to become overwhelmed with excessive sorrow.

It's the guy who led the charge against Paul. Paul, he's not just saying, you should forgive him. Paul is saying, it was me he had the problem with and I've forgiven him. Paul is showing here himself, he doesn't have the choice in himself of wallowing in unforgiveness either.

He's not just in authority over them. He's a man under authority, the authority of Jesus. And in case you don't know, Jesus did not mix words when it came to unforgiveness. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said this, Matthew 6.

[18:05] This is towards the end of the Lord's Prayer. It may be a part of that passage you've never considered before. Give us this day our daily bread. Oh, we love that. Forgive us all our debts.

We love that too. As we also have forgiven our debtors. Eh, not so much. Lead us into temptation. Deliver us from evil. And then it goes and Jesus says this, If you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you.

But if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses. Yikes. Right?

We need some white out for that one. You know? I don't like that. My first question is, what others? Shouldn't there be a clause here? You know, certain others.

You know, some others. You know, maybe related others. I don't know. Like, there's no clarification here. It's just others. And this comes up a lot. Luke 6, 37. Forgive and you'll be forgiven.

[19:04] Mark 11, 25. Whenever you stand praying, forgive if you have anything against anyone. Talk about general. If you have anything against anyone. Others.

Just no one in God's kingdom, not even Paul, gets the right to disobey this. We're under authority. We're under Jesus' authority. So this is optional for us as followers of Jesus.

Now, let me just get practical for a second. I think we see a lot of practicals here. So if you're kind of going, how do I do this? If you're going to move toward forgiveness, there's a few essential things here that I think we see that will help you.

First, you need a commitment to doing whatever is necessary. And we see that with Paul. I mean, he's writing this. He's written several letters. He is persisting in this thing. He's not giving up in this thing. And these letters are, like, intense.

They're articulate. He's not pulling punches, but he's also, like, bending over backwards to try and help them understand and see. And all the rest. So I think we're seeing here, Paul, a commitment to do whatever is necessary.

[20:04] People walk away from relationships for a lot less than what Paul has got here. And he keeps going back again and again. I have friendships like that, guys. Where, like, I have been sinned against multiple times.

Offended multiple times. And I want to just go, enough with this. Enough with this person. But, like, man, God's put me and this person together. And, like, we keep fighting for this relationship. And I've done that, just so you know.

Sorry. Spoiler alert. You know, your pastor's sin. You know, like, I've hurt people. And really, man, I can be really hurtful with my words. You know?

And I've had people who've forgiven me again and again and again. I was sitting with a married couple recently that are, and their marriage is in a tough, really tough, bad spot. And I could just tell that they thought that I didn't know what that was like because I was a pastor.

And I was like, guys, just so you understand. There's not a single marriage on the planet that's a good marriage that is a good marriage by accident. Every good marriage is a good marriage because the two people in that marriage have got their dukes up fighting for the marriage.

[ 21 : 14 ] You've got to be willing to do whatever is necessary, right? So that's the first thing you're going to need. And Paul had that. And he's willing to look weak. Also, you're going to need to be willing to humble yourself. We see Paul doing that.

He lays down his rights. He's willing to look weak. And he knows they're likely going to turn around and use that against him. He just lays down his rights. He comes humble.

My good friend John Murphy, he uses the language of laying down your sword in these kinds of interactions where you say, this is what I can use to defend myself.

Maybe it's your quick wit or your words or your, like, we all have something that we use, like a defense mechanism. And John describes it like putting your sword down, which makes you vulnerable now.

You're vulnerable to attack. But, like, it opens, that posture paves the way. It opens the door for grace and for mercy and forgiveness to come. So commitment to doing whatever's necessary, willing to humble yourself.

[ 22 : 09 ] I think you need to exercise wisdom with who you share your offense with. So Paul has got this deal where he's forgiven this guy who sinned against him. The Corinthians are not ready to move on.

He's having a hard time calling the dogs off, right? And you've probably experienced some of this in your life where you shared, you know, something that someone did to you. And, you know, you shared with your family or you shared with some of your friends or whatever.

And they took it to a whole other level. Like, you know, they just went nutso on, like, how they were never going to forgive. Like, they were going to go destroy this person's life.

Like, there's wisdom involved in who you share your offense with. Because sometimes people will pick up your offense and run further than you want it to go. And when you've forgiven, they're like, nope, sorry, not me.

And it wasn't even them. And that's kind of what's happening with this Corinthian situation here is Paul's saying, guys, it was me and I already forgave him. So I'm begging you guys, enough's enough.

[ 23 : 07 ] You know, sometimes you do need to process a situation with someone like, how do I go about this? Well, just pick that person wisely, those people wisely.

People who love you and love you enough to be honest. Like, hey, man, I don't think you're seeing your error in this. Just wisdom stuff here. Again, it's just practical. A commitment not just to forgive, but also to forget.

That's something I think you need to. Paul says in verse 10, Indeed, would I have forgiven if I've forgiven anything? What's going on here, right? N.T. Wright in his commentary says this about this. He said, it's a throwaway line in the middle of verse 10 where Paul demonstrates forgive and forget. When he says, whatever I've forgotten, he begins and then he racks his brains to see if, is there in fact anything, in fact, forgiven anyone of anything?

He assumes he must have, but he can't for the life of him think who or what it was. If indeed I've forgiven anyone, anything, he adds. This isn't, N.T. Wright says, absent-mindedness.

[ 24 : 11 ] It's part of a rigorous spiritual discipline. When Paul forgives, he forgets. And sometimes we do this, I forgive, but I never forget, sort of like mafia kind of thing, right?

You know? It's not scriptural. It's like, it makes for great, like, you know, mobster movies or cowboy movies, but it doesn't make for good Christian behavior.

We need to embrace the hope of reconciliation. Sometimes we say, I'll forgive, but I never want to see your face ever again, right?

Man, if God can heal the vertical relationship between us and him, he can heal some pretty remarkably broken horizontal relationships between us and others.

But, again, circling back to that little caveat at the beginning, this isn't always the case. Reconciliation is not always possible. And that's a manipulative, abusive tactic that people have used in the past as well.

[ 25 : 12 ] The Bible says you must forgive, which means you must just continue being abused by me. And that's not always possible, right? There are consequences for our sinful actions.

But I'm just saying, I think there's more hope for our horizontal relationships with each other than a lot of times we imagine, you know? Someone said to me recently, man, I'm just like, I'm just stewing in my anger like my child in the middle of the night when they just overtired.

And I just said as lovingly as I could, but you're not a child. You're an adult. And more than being an adult, you're a believer. You're getting filled with the Spirit of God.

You've got some tools in your toolbox here that a child at 1045 at night does not have. And so, man, let's lean in hoping that reconciliation is possible, knowing that sometimes it's not.

Just a couple more of these practicals. You need a love for the gospel witness. More is at stake than you and the other person, which is why I think Paul keeps coming again and again and again. I know, in fact, because he says it in 2 Corinthians, this is really what he's worried about them losing is the gospel itself.

[ 26 : 18 ] And gospel witness to a watching world. We are not just forgiven. We are brought into a community of fellow people who have been forgiven. Right? And so a forgiving father wants us to be his forgiving children.

He wants the forgiveness we experience from him and to each other to witness to the world of the gospel. Look at what we see in some of these other letters. Ephesians 4.32. Bear with one another. And if one has a complaint against one another, forgiving one another. As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. This idea that the church would be full of people who forgive one another because Jesus has forgiven them.

Colossians 3.13. Be kind to one another. Tenderhearted. Forgiving one another as God and Christ forgave you. Church is meant to be more than a place where we come together, sing kumbaya, and throw some money in a bucket and go home.

It's actually meant to be a place where we actually wrestle through hard, sad things and we forgive each other because of what Jesus has done for us. And it leads to the gospel getting put on display to a watching world.

[ 27 : 20 ] And almost nothing displays the gospel like choosing to forgive someone who doesn't deserve it. Last practical here. You need to really fear the plans of Satan.

That hungry lion. Not knowing he's there is ignorance. Knowing he's there and playing into his hands by choosing to unforgive. That's deadly business. And I've been there and you've been there or you'll be there soon.

Your emotions are going to tell you to dig your heels in. And you need to take charge of your emotions. Soberly assess the situation and reckon this is hard but going with Satan seems worse. And it seems like that's a worse play. The scripture shows us there that when you choose unforgiveness you get outwitted by Satan. What's the opposite of that mean? This is really amazing.

It means when you and I choose to forgive and we don't want to. It means that you outwit Satan. You con the con man. You dupe the duper.

[ 28 : 22 ] Like you pull one over on him. When you choose to forgive you outwit Satan. You take away his ammo. You cause him to lose his footing. It's almost like you can feel it happening too.

Like all the anger and all the rage and all the like motivation. All that power that you feel. You can feel it just sort of like drifting away. Like he loses ground.

When you come and say I forgive you. You disarm him. So all these things are awesome and necessary. But one thing that matters the most.

Most of all what you need most of all. Is an awareness of what Jesus has done for you. We've read in this passage about how giving into unforgiveness. It plays into the hands and the plans and the design of Satan.

But again choosing to forgive does something way better. It aligns us with this cosmic plan that God has. Recapping the scenario here.

[ 29 : 20 ] Paul loves this church. He supported it at great personal expense to himself. You can read about that in Acts 18. They turn on him. They follow a more persuasive false teacher.

And they go down a road of unforgiveness and pain. That's the scenario 30,000 foot. What does that have to do with the Bible, the gospel? Well in the beginning of the Bible. God starts the universe.

And makes a garden for Adam and Eve to enjoy at no cost to themselves. They however. Believe and follow a more pervasive teacher.

In fact Satan himself. Thereby accusing God of not being who he said he was. Not being good. Not being enough. This carries on through generations. Spreading pain and sorrow.

God sends letters. Through the prophets in the Old Testament. And eventually however. God doesn't just send a letter anymore. He sends his son. His only son.

[ 30 : 15 ] And then they're like. Yeah man. That's what we were looking for. Now we get it. No. They murdered him. And what was the son's dying response? Luke 23, 34. Jesus said.

Father. Forgive them. For they know not what they do. This little micro story. Over here. Between Paul and the church in Corinth.

Is part of a macro story. A meta narrative. A big story. That's being told all through the Bible. In fact. If you. Remember. We just read these passages.

Where we're commanded to forgive others. And it's almost always linked to this phrase. As God in Christ forgave you. Scripture doesn't just tell us to go and forgive. It reminds us why. The father answered Jesus' dying prayer.

And forgave us all of our sins. The command that we see to forgive anyone of anything. Is also a promise. We are. Any of us. For anything.

[ 31 : 13 ] Offered forgiveness. This is this cosmic plan that's going on. Throughout all the ages. What God was up to. Was to forgive us. And when you and I choose to forgive.

When we choose to unforgive. We know we align ourselves with Satan. But when we choose to forgive. We align ourselves with the plan of God. This cosmic plan of God. To look to close.

In Matthew 18. Jesus tells the parable about unforgiveness. And in the parable. He doesn't appeal to morality. Like you know. You guys should forgive. Because that's what good upstanding citizens do.

That's not what he does. He appeals to grace. I'll just sum most of this up for you. You probably heard it before. Read it before. But what we learn is that a man owed his master a debt more than he could ever pay.

But he. The master came to him. Asked for this. This payment. And the man begged for time. It's interesting. He said be patient with me. I will pay you back everything.

[ 32 : 14 ] But what we learn is that that was a pretty foolish and arrogant thing to pray. Or to ask for. Because there was no way he would ever come up with this amount of money. The amount of money was the equivalent of about six billion dollars.

So this guy owed his master six billion dollars. The master comes and says I want my payment. And this is what the guy says. Just give me some more time. And bro what kind of business are you in? Right? How are you going to come up with six billion dollars?

In fact how did you get into a situation where you owed six billion dollars? Now just to let you in on the story. We're that guy in the parable. Because sometimes we're like oh we're Jesus.

We're not. We're that guy. Right? We owed a debt we couldn't pay. We owed a debt we couldn't pay. And our stance to God is something usually along the lines of just give us another chance.

We'll do good this time. We asked for like the foolish wrong thing like he did. Now the master in the story took pity on him. Crazy. He totally forgave him the debt.

[ 33 : 13 ] He didn't say I'll give you plenty of time. He said it's all forgiven. Now that would have not come free. Somebody had to pay for that six billion dollars. In fact this insane.

The whole idea by the way of the six billion. It was just it was to come up with a number so big that it would have been like paralyzing to think about. It's more of a figurative number. And the master said you know what that that crazy cost that feels impossible to you.

I'm going to pay it. That debt that you have no chance of ever coming close to. It's not just going to go away. It's going to go away because I'm going to do the unthinkable.

The same way God couldn't just forgive us by saying all is well. Now a debt had to be paid.

And Jesus stepped in and paid it. Now in this parable what happens next is really horrific. Before we read it I want you to just imagine that you owed six billion dollars.

[ 34 : 14 ] Now if we'd read the whole parable there you would have seen it was worse than that. Because what was going to happen was. This guy's wife and children were going to get sold into slavery as part of the payment.

So this is a profound miracle that happened in this guy's life. It wasn't just him and his debt. But it was the whole future of his family was impacted through this. Imagine that this had happened to you.

Your wife and children are about to be hauled off to slavery. You're about to have to spend forever and basically in indebted servitude. The whole rest of your life and your children's lives and their children's lives would have been spent trying to pay off this debt.

And all of a sudden it was gone. How do you think you would have responded? I mean I imagine you would have skipped around. You know passing out candies and high-fiving people and being the nicest guy there ever was.

Right? Here's what happened. Matthew 18 28. When that same servant went out he found one of his fellow servants. This does not sound like he just happened upon him.

[ 35 : 16 ] It sounds like he went looking for him. Who owed him a hundred denarii. That's about \$12,000. And seizing him he began to choke him saying pay what you owe me.

This is a provocative parable Jesus is telling. He says this guy was about to get hauled off into slavery with his wife and kids for generations to pay a debt he could never ever come close to. He was forgiven and his first response is to go look for somebody who owed him pennies compared to what he owed. And to choke him and demand that he pay.

This is a guy who had been forgiven all but was not willing to forgive any. What had happened to him personally had not had any impact on how he acted corporately.

And in God's eyes it's unacceptable. We've been given grace. We are to give grace. In fact look how the parable ends. His master summoned him and said to him.

[ 36 : 20 ] You wicked servant. I forgave you all that debt. At great personal expense. To the master. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant.

As I had mercy on you. In his anger the master delivered him over to the jailers until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly father will do to every one of you if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.

Man these are hard words guys. It's a serious business. We're given to unforgiveness. We play into the hands of an enemy who an adversary who outwits us so he can devour us.

But when we walk this painful but hard but necessary road of forgiveness. We align ourselves with this cosmic plan of this God who does the unthinkable to forgive us.

But he expects us to extend that forgiveness to others as well. As the band comes up. If you're here you're watching this and you're not yet a follower of Jesus.

[ 37 : 29 ] Don't try to pay the debt. We do that. We're like I'm going to be a good person and then I'm in heaven I'm going to like I'm going to get brought right in. No that's not how it works. It's a number you can't even come close to.

You're never going to come close. Don't try to pay for it. Galatians 2.21 Paul says if anyone can be saved through works of the law. If anyone can be saved by that way.

If that could work for anybody. Paul says in Galatians 2 then Christ died for no purpose. The evidence is there. We had no chance. God had to step in and pay. So don't pay it yourself.

And don't do this thing that we often do where we go oh my sins are too much. The promise of forgiveness extends to anyone to be forgiven of anything. All that's required is that you ask for it. He wants to take pity on you. Take mercy on you. Send his grace to you. If that's you this morning we'd love a chance to talk with you and pray with you about that here in just a moment.

[ 38 : 29 ] But for the rest of us already followers of Jesus. I'd like you to get that little cup out that's next to you. And I know it's noisy to peel. We'll just all peel it off at once.

So we get the noise out of the way. But then just hold on to it. We're going to take this meal together. One of the saddest things for me is how often this kind of a moment becomes just ritualistic.

In a bad way like we're just going through the motions. In fact it's human nature to start even disengaging like okay I got to get the kids or I got to get to the car. We got to get to lunch. Let's just not do that yet.

Let's just hang here for a second. Right. This is a meal that we did not deserve. We didn't deserve this meal. But we don't just eat it.

We participate with it. I love what we see Paul spell out in the first letter 1 Corinthians 10. This is a cup of blessing that we bless. Is it not a participation, a fellowship in the blood of Christ?

[ 39 : 32 ] He says this bread that we break, is this not a participation in the body of Christ? We're vertically connected to Jesus. We're horizontally connected to one another because of this meal.

Because there's one bread, we who are many are one body for we partake. We fellowship together in this one bread. This is a participation with Jesus and a participation with each other.

This is not a table where you come and air your grievances. There's a silly episode of Seinfeld back in the day where George Costanza, his family had this tradition, the airing of grievances, where they would get around a table and shout all the things that were angry at each other.

This is, church often feels like that when it's in its worst, the swampy kind of versions of Christianity. This is not that. This is a table. We don't get to come to this table and hold grievances against one another.

Air grievances. This is a table that none of us deserve to sit at. A table we don't deserve, a meal we don't deserve. We have been forgiven much.

[ 40 : 40 ] We've been forgiven a debt we could have never have paid. And this meal is to conjure up that memory. It's provocative. Jesus said to do this. When you do this, remember my body broken for you.

My blood shed for you. Someone had to pay for our sins and it was Jesus. So family, those of us who've received grace and mercy, let's eat and drink in honor of Jesus.

And as we've remembered what Jesus has done for us vertically, let's remember it's got horizontal implications, right? That Matthew 18 parable is in the Bible.

You and I participating in this meal is not just saying we're glad our debt was paid. See on the other side. It's agreeing. When you, you and I participating in this meal, we're not just saying we needed it.

We're saying we're willing to be part of this plan. This plan of giving forgiveness, not just receiving forgiveness. And that might mean that you've got some work to go do. It might mean that there's someone in this room.

[ 41 : 57 ] Oh, that'll be awkward. Or someone in your family or work or a neighbor. I don't know. And the whole time we've been talking about this, you're like, man, that person, that thing, that situation.

It might be that you've got some work to go do this week. That's part of the plan. That's part of us saying, Jesus, we're not, we're not, we don't just receive mercy and grace.

We want to be part of giving it. God, I pray for my friends and myself. You would help us to live this out. Make us a forgiving people.

Quick to forgive. Putting your gospel on display. Help us outwit Satan. Some of us in the room don't even realize we've been duped.

We're supporting a Nigerian prince on the internet. We're giving in to unforgiveness, not realizing the consequences at stake.

[ 42 : 55 ] Rescue us. Help us, Jesus. We ask all this in your name.