

Memorial Day is not just a long weekend, a day off, or the beginning of summer. At its heart, it is a day of remembrance

It calls us to slow down and recognize that the freedoms we enjoy came at a cost

And that word “**cost**” brings us right to the heart of the gospel

Long before we ever spoke about national freedom, the Bible speaks about spiritual freedom

Freedom from **sin, shame, condemnation, bitterness**, freedom from the **prison of unforgiveness**

At the cross, Jesus Christ gave His life so that sinners could be forgiven

He bore our **sin**, carried our **shame**, **absorbed the judgment** we deserved, and Jesus opened the way for us to be **reconciled to God**

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. Ephesians 1:7 NKJV

Because forgiveness always meets us in real places, real **hurt**. real **failure**, real **betrayal**, real **regret**, real **pain**, and real **wounds**

The Bible never asks us to **pretend those wounds are not real, nor does Memorial Day**

When we look at Memorial Day, we remember the sacrifices made to protect the freedoms we enjoy in this country

When we look at the cross, we remember the sacrifice that purchased eternal freedom

And as believers, we are called not only to receive that forgiveness, but also to extend it

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. Ephesians 4:32 NKJV

So today, we are going to continue to talk about biblical forgiveness

I am not talking about saying **I am sorry** or **I apologize** – I am talking **about forgiveness**

Biblical forgiveness begins with God - The Bible begins with God’s willingness to forgive us, **Genesis 3:15**

Forgiveness is commanded by Christ - Peter came to Jesus with a question many of us would have asked - **Then Peter came to Him and said, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times? Matthew 18:21 NKJV**

Forgiveness releases bitterness before it destroys us

Unforgiveness **never stays still**. It **always grows**. So, we stop feeding the pain with resentment – keeping our thoughts captive - ...**bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ**
2 Corinthians 10:5b NKJV

Focusing on what is good! **Whatever things are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, good report, if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.** Philippians 4:8 NKJV

Forgiveness reflects the character of Christ

At the cross, Jesus gave the greatest example of forgiveness the world has ever seen

Then Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do Luke 23:34 NKJV

Jesus was not speaking from a **place of comfort**; He was hanging on the **Cross in agony**

He was not forgiving people who had apologized or said they were sorry

Jesus was praying for people who were **mocking** Him, **crucifying** Him, **gambling** for His **clothes**

Forgiveness is not easy, forgiveness makes us more Christlike

When we forgive, we are not saying, “What you did was okay”

We are saying, “What Jesus did for me is greater than the offense”

Forgiveness is one of the **clearest ways** the **world sees** the gospel in us

The forgiven people become the forgiving people

Forgiveness restores fellowship with God and others

Jesus taught that unresolved unforgiveness affects our spiritual life

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. Matthew 6:14 NKJV

But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Matthew 6:15 NKJV

Just to be clear, this does not mean **we earn salvation by forgiving others**. Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ, **Ephesians 2:8** NKJV

Forgiveness keeps **our hearts soft** before God because of Jesus

An unforgiving heart **struggles to worship** freely, pray honestly, love sincerely, or serve joyfully

You **cannot hold tightly to bitterness and hold tightly to Christ** at the same time. **One of them will shape you**

Note: Forgiveness is a process, not a singular moment in time

Sometimes forgiveness happens in a single prayer. Other times, forgiveness is a repeated act of surrender on our part

You may forgive someone today and then feel the hurt rise again tomorrow

That does not always mean you failed. It may mean you need to bring it back to the Lord again

The wound is probably deeper than we realize in the moment, **but God's grace is deeper**

Forgiving yourself?

The Bible does not really command us to “forgive ourselves” in the same way it commands us to forgive others. Why?

Because ultimately, **sin is first against God**, and only our Lord has the authority to forgive sin

What does it mean to “forgive yourself”?

It is learning to stop living under guilt, shame, and condemnation after Jesus has forgiven you

Because Jesus's forgiveness is greater than your failure

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9 NKJV

Because of Jesus, confession is not the end of the road, it is the doorway back to grace

When we bring our sin into the light, Jesus does not meet us with **rejection**, but with **forgiveness, cleansing, and restoration**

So we come honestly, humbly, and gratefully to the One who is **“faithful and just to forgive”**

His Word says, **“He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us.”** Notice what Jesus does: He **forgives**, and then He **cleanses**

When we say that we don't forgive ourselves, we are refusing to receive His forgiveness that He suffered and died for

This is not humility; it is a form of pride, unbelief, and idolatry

It is like saying, “Lord, I know You forgave me, but I still think I need to keep on punishing myself”

When Jesus forgives, He is not asking us to **keep punishing** ourselves; **He is inviting us** to walk in the freedom that he purchased at the cross

Jesus did not pay for **sin halfway**. **He paid for it fully**

So, **choosing to live in condemnation is not from Christ**

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus Romans 8:1 NKJV

Conviction and condemnation are not the same thing

Conviction says, “This was sin. Bring it to Jesus. Repent. Walk in grace”

Condemnation says, “You are your sin! You will never be free! Jesus must be tired of you!”

Conviction leads you back to Jesus. Condemnation drives you into hiding

When Jesus has forgiven you, continuing to live under condemnation does not make you more spiritual

It just keeps you chained to something Jesus already died to break

Shame can keep you from serving our Lord

Peter denied Jesus three times. That was not a small failure. He denied the Lord publicly

But after the resurrection, Jesus restored Peter and called him back into **ministry**

He said to him the third time, Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me? Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You. Jesus said to him, Feed My sheep. John 21:17 NKJV

How do we practice biblical forgiveness?

First, remember how much Jesus has forgiven you. Start at the cross!

Second, name the wound honestly before Jesus. Do not minimize it

Third, release your right to personal revenge. Put the person and the pain into Jesus’s hands

Fourth, pray for your own heart. Sometimes the **first miracle** is not that the other person changes, sometimes the **first miracle** is that bitterness **loses its grip on you**

Fifth, pursue peace where it is wise and possible

If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Romans 12:18 NKJV

Made For More

Grace, we **were never made to live buried beneath our failures**

We were not **made to be defined by shame, fear, bitterness, or the wounds of yesterday**. We were made for more!

Maybe you're walking and carrying regret.

Maybe you have been living under the weight of what you did, what was done to you, or what you think disqualifies you. But the cross tells a better story

You were made **for more than guilt, bitterness**, just to survive another week

You were made to know Christ, follow Christ, and make Christ known

You and I are **"Made For More,"** because Jesus lives, we **can rise**, we **can forgive**, we can be **restored**, and we can step forward into the life we were made for