

Forgiveness is one of the most beautiful words in the Christian life, but it is also one of the hardest to practice

Forgiveness touches **real wounds, real betrayal, real disappointment, real pain**, and sometimes **months, years, and decades of unresolved hurt**

The Bible does not pretend forgiveness is easy. But the Bible does make it clear: forgiveness is not optional for the believer

It is central to the gospel, central to our walk with Christ, and central to the health of the church

God has forgiven us through Jesus Christ, and because we are forgiven, we are called to forgive one another

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

That verse gives us both the **command and the reason**. Forgive one another. Why? Because God in Christ forgave us

Biblical forgiveness is **not pretending** the hurt did not happen. It is **not excusing sin**

Biblical forgiveness begins with God

The Bible begins with God's willingness to forgive us *Genesis 3:15*

All of us have sinned against God. We have not merely made mistakes; we have violated the holiness of God. Every sinful thought, word, attitude, action, **and motives stands before Him**

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23 NKJV

That means our greatest problem is not first what others have done to us, but what sin has done between God and us. We owe a debt we cannot pay, and we need mercy; we cannot earn

And this is where the gospel shines

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

Forgiveness is not God brushing sin under the rug

Forgiveness is God dealing with sin through the blood of Jesus Christ

At the cross, Jesus paid the debt we could never pay. He absorbed the judgment we deserved

And there is more....

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." Hebrews 8:12 NKJV

For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him Psalm 103:11 NKJV

As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. Psalm 103:12 NKJV

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

Peter probably thought he was being generous. Seven times sounds gracious

But Jesus answered - Jesus said to him, I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. Matthew 18:22 NKJV

Jesus was not giving Peter a mathematical limit

He was teaching him that forgiveness should not be measured with a calculator

Forgiveness should flow from a heart that has been **transformed by His forgiveness and mercy**

In **Matthew 18:21-35**, Jesus tells the parable of the unforgiving servant. One man owed his master an **impossible debt**. **He could not pay it**. He begged for patience, and the master forgave him

But then that same servant went out and found someone who owed him a much smaller debt. Instead of showing mercy, he **grabbed him, demanded payment**, and threw him into **prison**

The point is **direct and uncomfortable**: people who have received great mercy should become people who extend great mercy

When we refuse to forgive, we act as if the debt against us is greater than the debt Christ forgave in us

Forgiveness releases bitterness before it destroys you

Unforgiveness never stays still. It always grows

At first, it may feel like protection. We say, "I am just keeping my distance." Sometimes distance is wise, and boundaries may be necessary because safety matters

But bitterness is different. Bitterness is when the wound becomes a prison, and we become both the prisoner and the guard

Paul says - *Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice Ephesians 4:31 NKJV*

Notice the logical progression. Bitterness lives in the **heart**, wrath and anger come out in emotion, clamor, and evil speaking come out in words

Malice becomes the desire to **see harm come to another person**

Unforgiveness does not just damage the relationship with the offender. It damages the soul of the offended

Forgiveness does not mean the pain instantly disappears

It means you stop feeding the pain with resentment – keeping our thoughts captive

Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ 2 Corinthians 10:5 NKJV

Forgiveness says, Lord, I am giving this person and this wound into Your hands.

You are **the Judge**, You are **righteous**, You know **what happened**, You know **what it cost me**, I refuse to let **bitterness become my master**

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. Philippians 4:8 NKJV

This is very important: biblical forgiveness is not the same thing as pretending everything is fine

Forgiveness **does not mean an abuse should continue**. Forgiveness **does not mean trust is automatically restored**. Forgiveness **does not mean consequences disappear**. Forgiveness does **not mean that reconciliation** is always possible immediately

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 God has the authority to forgive sin

What do many people mean by “forgiving yourself” **Learning to stop living under guilt, shame, and condemnation after God has already forgiven you**

Because God’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

Notice what God does: He forgives, and then He cleanses

That means when you confess your sin to God, you are not waiting for God **to maybe forgive you**

His Word says “**He is faithful and just to forgive.**” So refusing to receive that forgiveness is not humility — it can actually become a form of pride, unbelief and idolatry

It is like saying, “Lord, I know You forgave me, but I still think I need to punish myself a little longer”

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

Living 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 God. Repent. Walk in grace.”

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

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

When God 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 God

One great example is Peter

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

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

Jesus did not ignore Peter's failure, but He also did not **leave Peter buried under it**

That matters! If Peter had refused to receive Christ's restoration, he could have spent the rest of his life saying, "I am the man who denied Jesus"

But Jesus was saying, "You are still Mine. Now **feed My sheep.**"

Jesus was not saying, "Peter, what you did didn't matter." He was saying, "Peter, My grace is greater. You are still Mine. Now feed My sheep."

That is the goodness of God!

His goodness does **not mean we never fail**. His goodness means our failure does not get the final word.

And maybe today, someone here needs to stop saying.....

"I am what I did." Maybe you need to hear Jesus say, "You are still Mine