

# Forgiveness is Freedom 3:

## ***The Power of Reconciliation***

(preached 5/23/21)

Please turn to *Philemon*.

### **Sermon #1: Identifying the Problem.**

- We're made in God's image—3 branches of government. God wrote His laws into our hearts.
- God created 225 commandments and people couldn't obtain them, even with animal blood sacrifice to atone for sin.
- Result was 1) God reminds people of His laws. 2) Rebellion & violation of commandments, 3) God rendering guilty verdict, 4) God gets angry and takes executive action. 5) People brought low, then finally cry out for God. 6) God restores people. 7) God reminds people of His laws....
- Pharisees added 388 commands—didn't work.
- People in our lives can't live up to God's command nor the additional ones we've added.
- Thus the cycle of offense, anger, and desire for justice/retribution in our relationships.
- PROBLEM: if we don't enact standards the result is lawlessness and people do whatever they want.
- If we do, they rebel against the rules and go in the other direction.
- That was the problem with the OC!
- If our relationships are based on the same system, they're doomed to fail or go cold.
- BLOOD is the only payment justice will accept. The state penalizes people with jail, etc.
- We punish violators with silent treatment, temper outbursts, neglect, etc.
- If we continue down this path, we'll find it harder and harder to forgive and our hearts will become hard.
- It's time for a NC.

### **Sermon #2: Time for a New Covenant**

- We cannot modify the old one. Merely having less or more personal standards and rules will not solve the problem. Turning a blind eye to sin won't work either.
- Let's destroy and melt down the golden calf of "DESERVE" which is completely based upon the OC. We feel that we "deserve" better treatment whereas the offender "deserves" punishment and justice for what they've done.
- As long as we remain in this mindset, we won't be able to forgive.
- If God chose to include Gentiles yet graft us into the OC, we would all deserve death and Hell.
- He formed a NC and so must we!
- The OC Priesthood had the power to forgive or retain sins.
- People brought animal offering to Priest who inspected the offering only.

- If offering was without spot or blemish, the Priest transferred the sins of the offender onto the animal then killed it, sprinkling its blood and burning its body upon a fiery altar.
- Priest then declared human sins forgiven.
- It was the OFFERING that needed to pass the test!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
- Jesus is the eternal Lamb offering for the person who sinned against you and I.
- The writers of the NT call Him the “substitute” and other translations say “propitiation.”
- Jesus was killed and His blood sprinkled on the Mercy Seat of the Heavenly Ark, so now Father doesn’t judge us according to us, but looks only at Jesus and His Blood.
- We’re forgiven forever! All debts cancelled! Paid for by BLOOD—Jesus’ blood.
- The same blood is the payment for the sins of your offender.
- Just as Jesus fulfilled God’s Law on our behalf, He does the same for your offender.
- Jesus fulfills our personal laws as well.
- Now is the time to transfer the sins of the offender over to the Lamb, Jesus.
- We’re not VICTIMS! Jesus gave us power/authority to forgive sins!
- We also have the power to retain them...inside us.
- Don’t be a container for other people’s sin which will only drain our physical and mental health! Be a container for the righteousness of Jesus!

ANGER REMAINS? What if you still feel anger and hurt when you see/think about the person you forgave? Remember 2 important things: 1) Forgiveness is a supernatural act where the power of God assists us to truly cancel all debts and 2) God isn’t cheap. If Him and us partnered up to forgive someone and form a NC with them, no anger or hurt will remain. If those things still exist, debts have not been canceled.

**TODAY it’s time for reconciliation.**

**DISTANCE FORGIVENESS.** What we did last week is what I call “distance forgiveness” which means that, most likely, the person’s name whom you wrote on the cross and painted over wasn’t here. There wasn’t an interaction in the physical between you and them, but you cancelled their debts within your own heart, praise God.

**CIRCLE NOT COMPLETE.** Yet I say to you that the circle is not yet complete. Distance forgiveness is a semi-circle and the other half is reconciliation.

### **Matthew 5:21-24 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup> “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’

<sup>22</sup> But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.

<sup>23</sup> So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,

<sup>24</sup> leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

3 BRANCHES. Jesus lays out the 3 Branches of Justice of the OC in these verses. First He quotes the commandment of not murdering, then shows that hating someone is murder—violation. The violator is handed over to the judge and jury, verse 22a, and then punitive executive action is taken, verse 22b.

GIFT IS ANIMAL. Verses 23-24 are the parts we like to quote but it's sometimes interpreted from a modern, western lens. We tend to picture someone giving their tithe in verse 23 but that's not the correct—Jesus is talking about bringing an animal sin offering to the Priest for forgiveness of self. The human is approaching the Priest seeking God for His forgiveness which is good and right, but Jesus is telling us *that personal reconciliation is just as important for the people we have a Godly covenant with.*

WHO DO WE RECONCILE WITH? While reconciliation may or may not happen with your ex who moved to Alaska, we're being shown that it's paramount with a spouse, SO, family members, kids, friends, parents, and the people we go to church with.

TELL PRIEST YOU'LL BE BACK. In the 4 verses we just read, Jesus is telling us that even before our forgiveness from God is sought out, we're to leave our animal sin offering at the altar with the Priest, tell him "I need to go do something first, I'll be back" then we reconcile with someone we're in covenant with.

RECONCILE = MUTUAL. The distance forgiveness we did last week was only step 1 and involved only us and the Lord...now it's time for reconciliation. The word translates to "mutual" and involves a meeting with the person we forgave.

*God's not cheap.* When He fed the 5000 everyone ate until they were stuffed and there was still plenty left over. Our cup runneth over as the famous Psalm states, it doesn't runneth dry.

**He doesn't just stop at having us forgive someone in our hearts, He desires His children to come back together so that He might restore that which is lost.**

NO RECONCILE WITH GOD? Imagine if we only had the forgiveness of God and not reconciliation. When the glorious day comes when we walk the streets of the NJ, can you imagine you see Jesus approaching, walking toward you. Even though Christ has cancelled your debts, He's chosen to keep His distance from you emotionally because He remembers the way you sinned against Him in the past. As you meet up He's civil...but His heart is closed off from

you. Does that sound like a relationship? Do you want to spend eternity with Him merely being polite to you, but not warm and loving?

**Is this the rationale we take with each other?** Do we decided to “take over” the process of forgiveness from God and create our own covenant where we’ll cancel debt from a distance, but that’s it?

- Or perhaps we think God’s a cheapskate and that He’s only granted us the ability to forgive, but not to reconcile with the offender?
- Or maybe we think God isn’t as powerful as the sins the offender committed against us and the hurt we experienced? In other words, there’s just no way that so-and-so and I will ever like each other again?

### **Romans 5:1-5 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>2</sup> Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

<sup>3</sup> Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,

<sup>4</sup> and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,

<sup>5</sup> and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

**Verse 1:** Justified means justice has been satisfied, the commandments fulfilled, and all was done by Jesus. Look at the word Paul uses in last half of the verse: we have PEACE with God.

## **Peace is not cold civility.**

### **JESUS DIED FOR MORE!**

- Jesus wasn’t beaten nearly to death and hung on a Cross so that God would merely tolerate our presence.
- Jesus didn’t bleed out, die, and go to Hell and back so that we would be “polite” with the person we forgave but close our hearts to them.
- The peace Paul is referring to isn’t just quietness or a truce, but implicates a ***forward moving prosperity as the concordance defines it.*** In other words, when we make God’s peace with Him or another person then our relationship is improving, getting better, and closer. (No, it doesn’t have to be romantic.)

**Verse 2:** part of that grace and peace reconciliation is joy.

**Verse 5:** part of reconciliation is God’s love poured into our hearts. If God pours love into your heart like fine wine, do you believe He’d put in a ¼ glass or is He more of a “cup runneth over” God?

QUESTION. Let me ask: think of the person you forgave last week. *If the love of God was poured into your heart by the Holy Spirit, how would you treat the person whose name you wrote on the Cross?* Would you coldly civil, or....?

**Romans 5:6-11 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

<sup>7</sup> For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—

<sup>8</sup> but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

<sup>9</sup> Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

<sup>10</sup> For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

<sup>11</sup> More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

**Verse 6:** the weakness Paul is referring to is our inability to stop ourselves from committing sins. Christ still died for us.

**Verses 7-8:** we were sinners then, but Jesus died for us because He still loved and wanted to forgive us even when we didn't know Who He was.

**Verse 9:** justified...the demand for justice by the OC has been satisfied. No wrath for us, because remember wrath is executive punitive action to meet the blood payment justice demands. *The Blood of Christ was our payment so there's no wrath for the believer.*

**Verses 10-11:** **JESUS DIDN'T STOP WITH FORGIVENESS.** His great work on the Cross brought about a mutual reconciliation between Father God and us. Both of us coming together into a Father-son/daughter relationship based on love.

JOYFUL REUNION. When the day comes that we're all caught up to walk the gold streets of the NJ, we'll see Father, Jesus, and anyone in Christ who went before us and there will only be a joyful, loving, reunion. Yet we don't have to wait until then.

BACK TO MATT 5. Let's go back to Matthew 5 for a moment—Jesus says to leave our animal sacrifice at the altar *if we know that a person we're in covenant with has something against us.*

**Reconciliation shifts our position.** When we forgave from a distance, we were the offended party who needed to cancel the debts of another who hurt us. Now that we've done that, the other half of the circle is making right how we've hurt them.

TOUGH QUESTION. I'm going to ask a difficult question: *does the person whose name you wrote and painted over on the cross last week: do they have something against you?*

SPOUSE? PARENT? Maybe it was your spouse or SO—do they need to forgive you of something? Maybe a parent, a kid, someone sitting here in church...who has something against you?

CLEAN CONSCIENCE. **The circle will only be complete and our conscience clean when we go to someone we've sinned against and asked for their forgiveness.**

PERCENTAGE OF WRONG. Earlier on in my marriage when I felt my wife had sinned against me, I would assign percentages in order to prove I was more holy than she was. If we got into a fight, for example, I would say to myself that she was 70% wrong and I was only 30% wrong. Doing this allowed me to take the prideful and self-righteous position that she needed to be the one to approach me and make things right.

LORD QUOTES MATT 5. One day as I was stewing on this exact thing after we'd had a marital dispute, the Lord spoke and quoted Matthew 5. He made it clear she had something against me and was I going to obey His Word, go to her, and make things right? Absolutely not, I answered, because she was 90% in the wrong and me merely 10% then certainly He needed to go and talk to HER about approaching ME and reconciling. The Lord answered "She's not here right now and I'm talking to you. Are you going to go to her and make things right as I have commanded?"

*God didn't care one whit about my percentages and self-assigned victimhood—He wanted me to obey Him.*

**The only human being Who never needed to ask someone else for forgiveness was Jesus.**

*What about the rest of us?*

## CALL BARRY TO FRONT?

IMMATURE PASTOR. Years ago as a much younger and more immature Pastor I mistreated Barry badly and he was hurt. He left Gateway and despite being someone I was in Godly covenant with, I cancelled him and avoided him whenever possible. I figured that if I saw him, I would be civil and polite, but that's it. Before this falling out, Barry and I were brothers in

Christ who loved each other, prayed, ministered, and worshipped together. Several years passed with no communication, however, and every time I would think about Barry or hear his name, the Lord would speak and quote Matthew 5. He kept telling me over and over that I needed to go to Barry and make things right with him, but I kept making excuses.

**DELIVER A TREE.** Then Barry's next door neighbor called me and asked if I could deliver a Christmas Tree to her house because she couldn't drive and I agreed to. With the tree loaded in my truck I got going and keep in mind I have to drive into Barry's driveway to get to her house! God spoke and said "this would be a good time to make things right with Barry" and again: I made some lame excuse as to why I couldn't.

**BARRY COMES OUT.** After I arrived and delivered the tree, guess who came out of his house and approached me? Barry. He'd also been hearing Matthew 5 from the Lord, that he needed to approach me and make things right. Unlike me, Barry obeyed the voice of God and asked me to forgive him. I was instantly convicted and asked him to do the same for me, and we reconciled. The Lord restored everything that was lost and I gained a brother! My conscience and his were cleared and we experienced the peace Paul spoke of in Romans 5.

**PHILEMON.** I read to you now a small and often overlooked book in the NT: Philemon. Philemon was a Christian convert who was Saved and discipled by Paul, and he was also a master who formerly owned a slave name Onesimus. Onesimus fled from Philemon and went to Paul where he too, was Saved and discipled under Paul. With all this in mind, let me read to you the letter Paul writes to Onesimus' master Philemon:

**Philemon 1:1-22 (ESV)**

- <sup>1</sup> Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved fellow worker
- <sup>2</sup> and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house:
- <sup>3</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- <sup>4</sup> I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers,
- <sup>5</sup> because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints,
- <sup>6</sup> and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.
- <sup>7</sup> For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.
- <sup>8</sup> Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required,
- <sup>9</sup> yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus—
- <sup>10</sup> I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment.
- <sup>11</sup> (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.)
- <sup>12</sup> I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart.
- <sup>13</sup> I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf

during my imprisonment for the gospel,

<sup>14</sup> but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord.

<sup>15</sup> For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever,

<sup>16</sup> no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

<sup>17</sup> So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me.

<sup>18</sup> If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account.

<sup>19</sup> I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self.

<sup>20</sup> Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.

<sup>21</sup> Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

<sup>22</sup> At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you.

**SLAVERY EXPLAINED.** Slavery back then, in the Middle East, was not the same as it was in America before the Civil War. Anyone of any race could be a slave because it was about debt. When you couldn't pay your debts your possessions were sold first, then you were. God's Law said a person could only be a slave for 7 years and then they were to be set free.

**BONDSERVANTS** were people who chose, of their own free will, to remain with their masters for life because they loved them. **FREEMAN** were exactly that—people who never were or are no longer slaves.

**SENDS ONESIMUS BACK.** Philemon is the slave owner and Onesimus is the slave and both were converted and discipled under Paul. Something happened between the two that Paul doesn't reveal, only showing that Philemon thought Onesimus to be "useless." Behold the power of Godly reconciliation! Paul didn't just tell these two men to forgive each other from a distance, but he sends Onesimus back to his master, whom he likely fled from or was discarded by. Keep in mind a slave master has a right to physically beat a returned slave, or try and sell him to someone else.

**FREE EACH OTHER.** Yet what does Paul say to both of them and specifically to Philemon: forgive each other and **FREE** one another. Sin = debt. "Forgive us of our debts as we forgive our debtors." A person became a slave back then because they couldn't pay their debts. When someone sins against us, they're indebted to us—are we acting like slave owners and punishing the people who owe us? Are those who have something against us doing the same to us?

**MATT 5.** Onesimus may be the slave, but he is the one taking the bull by the horns, risking everything by going back to his master and...asking for forgiveness. They're both Christians and both knew what Jesus said: "if you know your brother has something against you, leave your gift at the altar, and go make things right with your brother." Paul aims most of his letter at



Philemon saying “it’s time for you to free Onesimus, who is your brother in Christ. Not just to have him go from free to bondservant, but to free him in both your heart and legally.”

GAP/ABUNDANT. Like Christ, Paul is willing to stand in the gap and say “charge anything (monetary or otherwise) to me...I’ll pay it.” He urges Philemon to accept Onesimus back as “a beloved brother.” Paul ends the letter by saying he believes Philemon will go above and beyond all that Paul is asking for and I don’t believe the Apostle is trying to coerce his disciple, but that his confidence comes because He knows the Godly character within Philemon.

**God isn’t cheap. He’s rich in everything and when we follow His way, He generously restores all that was lost and then adds more on top of it.**

### **2 Corinthians 5:16-21 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.

<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

<sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;

<sup>19</sup> that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

<sup>20</sup> Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

<sup>21</sup> For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

ANOTHER CHRISTIAN? If the person you forgave or has something against you is another Christian then look at verse 16—we no longer regard that person according to the flesh.

**Verse 17** means our regenerated, born again spirit is our real self and its made in the likeness of Jesus.

**Verse 18** Jesus reconciled us to Himself and Father...then He gave US the same ministry. Not only to help others be reconciled to God and each other, but for us to be reconciled with those we’ve forgiven or who need to forgive us.

**Verse 21:** what does God think for two people who have, through Christ, become the righteousness of God, not be reconciled to each other? Do we really believe its God’s will that we remain coldly civil to each other and remain at a distance? That wasn’t the case with Philemon and Onesimus.

# CALL PEGGY & CATE?

Jesus has declared us His under Priests who have the power to forgive or retain sins.

He's also called us Ministers of Reconciliation.