

# Forgiveness is Freedom 4:

## ***Forgiving Yourself: Clearing the Conscience***

(preached 5/30/21)

Please turn to *Romans 2 & Matthew 5:25*.

### **Sermon #3: The Power of Reconciliation**

- Distance forgiveness is only half the circle which will only be complete when we put the shoe on the other foot and ask others to forgive us.
- The only Person to have ever walked this earth Who never needed to ask another for forgiveness was Jesus...what of the rest of us? Is there someone who we know or suspect has issues with us that we need to approach?
- Jesus said to leave our animal sacrifice gift at the altar when we realize someone we're in covenant with has something against us—which shows the great importance the Lord places upon reconciliation. He urged us to go to that person and make things right with them first before seeking to be absolved by God.
- Who are we in active covenant with? Spouse, kids, parents, family, church members, co-workers....
- God's not cheap! If we've truly forgiven someone we're in active covenant with our hearts should not be angry or cold toward them. Onesimus and Philemon became loving brothers in Christ and weren't just "polite and civil" toward each other when they reconciled.
- When we move forward in reconciliation the Lord is with us!

TODAY I'm going to start with a parable.

JOHNNY ACCOUNTANT. This is Johnny (show power point picture) and he's an accountant whose been assigned to you for life. His total mission is to balance your books so that you have zero debt and every time you see him he's got a calculator in one hand and the books he keeps of your finances in another. Like Mary's Little Lamb, he follows you wherever you go and I mean wherever: at home, work, in your car, the grocery store, and even your bedroom and bathroom!

REMINDS YOU OF DEBTS. ***Before you get creeped out, Johnny has no interest in anything in life except keeping you out of debt.*** He has no wife, kids, hobbies, or anything and his nose is always stuck in the books he keeps. He continually reminds you of what you owe on your car, the credit cards, and even the 5 grand you borrowed from your parents last year that you haven't paid back. He likes to quote the Bible and say things like "the borrower is the slave to the lender" and "owe no one anything but love" and even "a fool and his money are soon parted."

CANNOT ACT W/O YOUR CONSENT. Johnny cannot and will not act on your behalf unless you tell him to. In other words, if you tell him to write a check toward the car or credit card, he

will do so, but will never do this on his own without your command. Thus he's always approaching you, bringing up your debts, and urging you to pay them.

**CONFRONTS ABOUT NEW PURCHASES.** What's more is that whenever you want to make another purchase, Johnny confronts you! Your cell phone carrier sent you a message that you can upgrade your phone at a discount and the one you want is part of the deal! It's got the triple lens camera, same one your sister in law has, that takes amazing pics! Plus you're tired of your cracked screen. Yet when you go to buy the phone Johnny speaks up and says "what are you doing?! We have debts to be paid and you're spending more money?! We can't afford this!" He says the same thing when you finally find the BBQ grill you wanted, the shoes that finally go with your one outfit, or the new fish pole you've had your eyes on.

**ADVERSARIAL RELATIONSHIP.** *Therefore your relationship with Johnny can only be called ADVERSARIAL.* He's not exactly a close friend and the two of you have butted heads time and again. He can be really irritating!

- You've tried ignoring him but it doesn't work, he just keeps confronting you.
- You've tried telling him to shut up but he won't.
- You've even tried arguing with him: "it's my money and my life!" you've shouted at him, "and I'll spend it any way I want! You're not my boss!" That hasn't worked.
- You've tried telling him that the new phone, grill, shoes, or fish pole would make you feel better and relieve some stress, but he doesn't care.
- You've tried promising him that you will start paying down those debts soon, but Johnny is unrelenting.

**MORE INSISTENT WITH GREATER DEBT.** As matter of fact, the more debt you get into the more intense and insistent he becomes.

- He keeps you up at night so you can't fall asleep, constantly reminding you of your debts and urging you to pay them.
- He's there when you get up in the morning rebuking you for spending too much and adding to your debts.
- Whenever you try to spend so much as a dollar, Johnny is right there trying to stop you or chastising you after the fact.

**PROPHECIES.** He even ups the ante by prophesying into your future: "you keep going down this road we'll be bankrupt and on the street!" he says to you. "Landlord will kick us out, parents stop talking to us, and our credit will be ruined!" he urges.

**DISTRACTIONS TEMP SILENCE.** He's driving you nuts! The only time you don't hear him is when you don't have time to think: at work, sleeping, singing, reading, hunting, praying, etc. Booze seems to make his voice a bit more distant too....

**REBEL!** You finally go into full Romans 7 rebellion mode because you're sick of Johnny's constant harassment. You're tired of all his restraints and rules for spending, tired of him reminding you about them all the time, and you go ahead and buy the shoes, pole, grill, and new cell phone! That'll show him! You think.

**DRUNK!** Right after making these purchases, Johnny changes for the worse! When you see him he's...drunk. Instead of holding his usual calculator, he's got a Bloody Mary that's light on the tomato juice and heavy on the whiskey. Staggering toward you, he sticks his finger into your chest and begins to say horrible things:

- he calls you a worthless spendthrift who only cares about yourself and no one else.
- He tells you that your kids are watching your spending and will grow up to do the same and that you're a bad parent.
- He prophesies that your spending is going to bring you and everyone you love down to bankruptcy and that you deserve it!
- You can't shut him up and you can't escape him. What was formerly annoying is now open **TORMENT**.

**VOICE OF SATAN?** Enough is enough! You go to a Christian friend and tell them everything, and they tell you: "that's not Johnny, it's the voice the devil talking to you. You need to do some spiritual warfare and swing the Sword of the Spirit to fight back against him." They lay hands on you and pray things like "no weapon formed against you shall prosper" and "if God is for you, who can be against you?" and "there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." They refer us to a good Stephen Furtick sermon that edifies us.

**QUOTE VERSES AT JOHNNY.** You feel somewhat better and are now prepared for your next confrontation with Johnny! As soon as you see him you stick your finger in his chest and shout: "in the name of Jesus Christ, get thee behind me Satan! Be silent and depart from me! You're a liar! I raise my Shield of Faith to quench the fiery darts you've thrown at me!"

**WORKS FOR A SHORT TIME.** That seems to shut him up, but only for a short while, and then he's back saying all the same terrible things he did before. No matter how much you attempt to bring your thoughts into captivity, how many verses of the Bible you quote, or how often you remind him that God loves you, drunk Johnny keeps torturing you. Your Christians friends say you must fight all the time, every day, but you quickly feel drained and worn down whereas Johnny seems to have endless energy.

**END OF THE PARABLE.**

**What's wrong?** Why aren't the prayers of others working? Why isn't your spiritual warfare silencing Johnny and stopping the torment?

**Maybe Johnny isn't the devil. Perhaps he's just drunk.**

DRUNK PEOPLE ACT DIFFERENTLY. Don't drunk people act far differently than when they're sober? Don't they often say mean and horrible things?

## **Does that make them Satan or just inebriated?**

*Please answer one of those two things and don't attempt to combine the two by saying "Satan is speaking through/using him."*

TRUE STORY TIME.

ANGRY CALL. In the late 90's during Christmas tree season I received a call where a man claimed to have bought a tree from me that died within a few days of getting it home. Even back then I was used to calls like these, so I asked the man to describe what happened. Before I continue let me say he was completely sincere and wasn't trying to scam me.

FLOWERING TREE. He said he bought a flowering fruit tree from me for \$150 as an anniversary gift to his wife, which she loved. After getting it home he noticed bugs were crawling on it and called me for advice. He said I recommended a chemical spray, which he bought and used, and the tree died immediately. His wife was very upset and therefore so was he, and he wanted to know what I was going to do about it. He was fist fighting angry over this which I would find out a few moments later.

RELIEF! Despite his anger, I felt an immediate sense of relief...why?

## **He had a case of mistaken identity.**

I WASN'T THE GUY. I hadn't sold him this tree nor had I given him advice to spray it. I sell cut Christmas Trees and not live flowering fruit trees. I realized he bought the tree from someone else and had called me by mistake. When I attempted to explain this to him, however, he didn't listen. *He spoke to me with a loud voice, rebuked me, attempted to silence me, and demanded that I compensate him.*

DIDN'T NEED TO LISTEN. I was under no obligation to any of this, not even to listen to another word he had to say. He had no authority over me. Why not? He wasn't my customer. He mistook me for someone else. *So despite having a righteous cause and speaking with great authority, I continued to deny him.*

**We can quote all the verses we want, take authority, speak with a loud and passionate voice, but if we're calling drunk Johnny "the devil" then he's under no obligation to respond or submit.**

# Johnny is our conscience that was created and programmed by God Himself.

## Romans 2:15 (ESV)

<sup>15</sup> They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them

***God's moral law is written on our hearts:*** don't steal, don't murder, worship God alone, don't take His name in vain, respect parents, etc. The job of the conscience is to quote God's Law to US.

SPENDING = SIN. Sin = debt. "Lord forgive us of our debts as we forgive our debtors."

SPENDING is committing sin and ***Johnny Conscience is all about keeping a zero sin balance.***

- If you and I are about to unload on our parents, Johnny's voice is heard within us calling for restraint.
- When we take God's name in vain, Johnny is right there telling us we shouldn't have done that.
- If we go ahead and do whatever he's trying to stop us from doing, he ACCUSES us of committing a sin and violating God's Law and/or our own.

EXCUSES. If we do right by avoiding the commission of sin, or repenting after the fact Johnny considers the debt paid and excuses us. Look at the latter part of Romans 2:15—***it's our conscience that accuses us of committing sin.***

## HAVE WE GOTTEN OURSELVES IN TROUBLE BY TRYING TO IGNORE OR REBUKE IT, CALLING IT SATAN?

PROGRAMMED. The SOBER conscience is doing the exact job God programmed it to do. When we ignore, rebuke, attempt to silence, and/or rebel against it, it can "get drunk":

## Luke 11:34 (AMP)

<sup>34</sup> Your eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye (your conscience) is sound *and* fulfilling its office, your whole body is full of light; but when it is not sound *and* is not fulfilling its office, your body is full of darkness.

## John 8:7-9 (NKJV)

<sup>7</sup> So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."

<sup>8</sup> And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

<sup>9</sup> Then those who heard *it*, **being convicted by their conscience**, went out one by one,

beginning with the oldest *even* to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

**DROPPED STONES.** The men with the stones realized they too had committed sins, very likely the same one as the adulterous woman, and their conscience convicted them of their hypocrisy causing them to drop their stones and walk away. Their conscience accused them...not the Devil.

**DEFILED.** In 1 Cor 8, Paul is explaining that some people have a “defiled” conscience when they commit sins that go unpaid for, and the word defiled means “soiled” like someone is when they’ve drunk too much and say things they shouldn’t.

**Sober Johnny is acting as God intended, whereas drunk Johnny is not.** Jesus described drunk Johnny as being “full of darkness” and Paul describes him as “defiled.”

**MISTAKEN IDENTITY.** I submit to you that we hear Johnny’s voice and mistake him for the Devil. Instead of listening to what he’s saying, we attempt to ignore him or argue with him. When things get worse and he starts tormenting us, we try quoting verses to rebuke or silence him.

***Our spiritual warfare isn’t working because Johnny is part of us and is trying to do the job God gave him.***

**DESPAIR.** When none of these things work, we fall into despair and try other things to silence him like working long hours, doing good things to try and satisfy him/prove him wrong, or perhaps drink or do drugs.

**Sober or drunk, our conscience will never back down until it receives two things: agreement and payment.**

**DON’T AGREE WITH DRUNK.** Right now is a moment for great potential misinterpretation, so I’m going to be clear. You never agree with a drunk conscience—it needs to be sobered up. You never agree with or submit to anything a defiled conscience says about you.

**SOBER CONSCIENCE.** The sober conscience, however, is a different story and Jesus tells us the exact process on how it works. Said process immediately followed the verses given last week about leaving the animal gift at the altar and reconciling with a brother. We go now to Matthew 5:25:

**Matthew 5:25-26 (NKJV)**

<sup>25</sup> Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary

deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.

<sup>26</sup> Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.

Let me read also from ESV:

**Matthew 5:25-26 (ESV)**

<sup>25</sup> Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison.

<sup>26</sup> Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

WHOSE THE ADVERSARY? Who is “your adversary” and “your accuser”? It’s not the Devil...Lord Jesus would never tell us to agree with him. Some commentaries claim the Adversary/Accuser here is God Whose trying to convict us of our sins, but the proper context in the verses that sandwich these two is the Law...the Commandments of God. Jesus is quoting from the 10 commandments in the verses before and after these two.

ADVERSARY IS LAW. Both our Adversary and Accuser here is God’s Law which acts like a mirror and shows us our spots and blemishes, symbolizing our violations of His commandments. Specifically, as Jesus says in the sandwiching verses, when the Law is quoted which is exactly what we read in Romans 7 a few weeks ago.

The #1 mechanism in our lives quoting God’s Law isn’t our Pastor or the legalistic Christian at Church, but Johnny Conscience who lives within us.

QUOTES THE LAW. Johnny quotes God’s Law when we’re tempted to sin to try and prevent us from doing it, and he quotes it again after the fact to point out that we just violated and committed a sin. He’s just like a mirror: he doesn’t care about our feelings, circumstances, trials, or troubles. His only goal is to have a zero sin balance.

HOW DRUNK? How and why does Johnny “get drunk” and what is the booze getting him that way? Jesus tells us the process in Matthew 25: 25-26 that we just read.

WALKING TO COURT. Our conscience, our adversary, has accused us of committing sins and we are walking together with him to court, as the ESV correctly points out. Remember sermon #1? We have all 3 branches of government in us and now that our accuser has brought charges against us, we’re on our way to appear before the Judge where he will formerly state the charges against us. If we get to court the judge will render a “guilty” verdict and sentence us to prison.

DEBTORS PRISON. Remember what I told you last week: when Jesus and the Apostle refer to prison, its debtors prison. People who are sent there can't pay what they owe to their accusers, who turn them over to the courts and then they're locked up. Not just to hang out either: they were tortured. Beatings, hot irons, the works. The Roman Government figured if you wouldn't pay your debts with money, it would get it from you in...blood.

***Sin = debt and the only payment for it is blood.***

**A drunk conscience is drunk on the blood of our debt.** Since it hasn't received a payment in the form it wants, it delivers us to the court and prison system where we're tortured by terrible thoughts and feelings of worthlessness and condemnation. These things follow us wherever we go, keep us up at night, ruin our relationships, and drain the life from us.

REMEDY. How do we get out and stay out of this terrible prison? Jesus gives us the remedy:

<sup>25</sup> Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him

SOBER JOHNNY. Sober Johnny didn't call you names or condemn you. All he did was point out when you violated God's Commandments or one of your own, and then he urged you to make restitution.

The advice I'm about to give is not what others are telling you, and might even be the opposite.

***Step 1 will unlock the door to the prison cell you've been in for too long:***

You need to agree with **sober** Johnny.

SINS? Is stealing a sin? If we steal and are accused of the same, shouldn't we agree? Is lying a sin? If we're caught in a lie and are confronted, shouldn't we 'fess up?

NOT THE DEVIL. He is your adversary just like a mirror is, but he's not the devil. Stop ignoring him, stop fighting with him, cease trying to talk him down, and quit rebelling against him. He's an accuser but he's not Lucifer.

- If he's been telling you that you've been neglectful of your spouse/SO, admit it.
- If he says your hot temper is affecting everyone in your family, confess it.
- If he says you have a sense of entitlement when it comes to your parents, admit it.
- If he says you've been disrespectful toward your boss, then acknowledge the fact.
- If he points out some hypocrisy on your part, it's time you agree.
- If he points out your tendency toward spreading gossip and rumors, admit it.



The moment we come into agreement with our sober conscience,  
our journey to court and therefore prison stops.

AGREEE QUICKLY. Jesus said so. He said that if we agree with our adversary QUICKLY while we were on the way to court, the journey would stop.

PAYMENT. The next thing its waiting for is payment and we all know what the payment is, the one its been waiting for: the Blood of Jesus Christ.

**Romans 3:21-26 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup> But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—

<sup>22</sup> the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:

<sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

<sup>24</sup> and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

<sup>25</sup> whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

<sup>26</sup> It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

SUBSTITUTE. *Just as the Lamb of God was the substitute for the person you forgave a couple weeks ago, He is also yours against your accuser: your conscience.* It's programmed by Father God Himself to accept the payment of the Blood of Jesus.

GOTTEN BLOOD FROM YOU. Maybe it hasn't gotten it in a long time and has been trying to extract it out of you—your blood. But it's created to receive and accept the Blood of Christ and therefore to absolve us of all sins.

**It's time to give it this payment and when we do we'll walk out of the prison we've been in for too long.**

**Romans 5:9-10 (ESV)**

<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.

ENEMIES OF GOD. Before we were Saved, we were enemies of God in that we owed Him big time. Jesus shed His blood at the Cross and payment was made to God in full—we're now saved from His wrath which was eternal debtor's prison—Hell.

Our conscience will accept the same payment and also release us from  
TORMENT.

## PRAY VERSES OVER PEOPLE

### **Ephesians 1:7-8 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,

<sup>8</sup> which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight

### **Ephesians 2:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

### **Colossians 1:15-23 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

<sup>16</sup> For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.

<sup>17</sup> And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

<sup>18</sup> And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

<sup>19</sup> For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,

<sup>20</sup> and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

<sup>21</sup> And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds,

<sup>22</sup> he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,

<sup>23</sup> if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

### **Hebrews 10:19-22 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,

<sup>20</sup> by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his

flesh,

<sup>21</sup> and since we have a great priest over the house of God,

<sup>22</sup> let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

**Hebrews 13:20-21 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup> Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant,

<sup>21</sup> equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.