

Identity

Exodus 34:6-7 - The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...

God here says that he values forgiveness so much that he attaches it to who he is - His identity.

I think before we move forward we should define what is forgiveness.

On Slide

Forgive - 1) to cancel a debt (to make un-guilty)
2) restore a relationship (**not on slide** - make amends - remove relational separation because of an evil or wrong)

God says this identifies this as part of his identity.

Pastor Frank has been emphasizing how this series is not about what we should but just demonstrating who God is. Well today we are going to try something a little different. We are going to read some different scriptures that look into this part of who God is who He chooses and promises to be - forgiving.

Story-time with pastor Christian but in each of these texts I want you to look for the “forgiveness moment.”

Israel - Give short context of God miraculously leading Israelites out of Egypt (plagues - parting of the sea), miraculously providing for them in the wilderness, promises them a new land. Brings them to it. Spies Report.)

Numbers 14:1-20 -

Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night. 2 And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, “Would that we had died in the land

of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! 3 Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?” 4 And they said to one another, “Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt.”

5 Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the people of Israel. 6 And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes 7 and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, “The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. 8 If the Lord delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. 9 Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them.” 10 Then all the congregation said to stone them with stones. But the glory of the Lord appeared at the tent of meeting to all the people of Israel.

11 And the Lord said to Moses, “How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them? 12 I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they.”

(Think of all the things they have seen and they still don't trust him.)

13 But Moses said to the Lord (Listen to this appeal of Moses) , “Then the Egyptians will hear of it, for you brought up this people in your might from among them, 14 and they will tell the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that you, O Lord, are in the midst of this people. For you, O Lord, are seen face to face, and your cloud stands over them and you go before them, in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. 15 Now if you kill this people as one man, then the nations who have heard your fame will say, 16 ‘It is because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land that he swore to give to them that he has killed them in the wilderness.’

(Do you guys hear the argument here?)

17 And now, please let the power of the Lord be great as you have promised, saying, 18 ‘The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no

means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation.’

(You see that Moses is throwing God’s own words back at him)

19 Please pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt until now.”

(Here comes God’s rebuttal to the argument. Ready...)

20 Then the Lord said, “I have pardoned, according to your word...”

What? That was it? Do you see the way Moses sought to be persuasive? He comes up with an argument?

There is no fight at all. God is persuaded way easier to forgive than basically anyone I have ever met right here.

Now, there were consequences for this rebellion for sure. God’s forgiveness did not mean there weren’t repercussions, but God spares their lives and doesn’t take away his promise from them. He says that God will forgive them and they will still have a relationship with him. He there God, and they as his people.

David - Review of his life. (David served under a king who was not faithful to God and knew what it was like to be abused by a King in power. That king dies becomes the King - Bathsheba - Pregnant - tries to cover it up. Kills her husband.)

2 Samuel 12:1-13 - And the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, “There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. 2 The rich man had very many flocks and herds, 3 but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. 4 Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.” 5 Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, “As the Lord lives, the man who

has done this deserves to die, 6 and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.”

7 Nathan said to David, “You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. 8 And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. 9 Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. 10 Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.’ 11 Thus says the Lord, ‘Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. 12 For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.’” 13 David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.” And Nathan said to David, “The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die.

Notice here. David’s response is not like Moses - big lengthy argument - just an admission of his guilt with a remorseful heart. God sees this admission as David asking for forgiveness. David doesn’t actually technically ask for forgiveness, but God puts away his sin.

As someone who knows what it means to sin and ask the Lord for forgiveness, David writes about the joy of this forgiveness God gives in Psalm 32.

Psalm 32:1-5 - Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah

When I read this Psalm of David, I relate so much to being face to face with my wrongs. The agony and pain.

And how is God looking at me in my deserved agony in my self inflicted wallowing.

“Well, that what you deserve.” “Let him struggle like that a little longer.”

No. God says, why don't you tell me about it so I can forgive you and take your guilt and shame away. God is waiting to forgive.

Listen to this promise God gives the nation of Israel. He says that they will do evil things and turn on Him and oppress the poor and

2 Chronicles 7:14 - if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

I want to read you a story that plays that tests the limits of God's promise here.

Let's read about Manassah -

2 Chronicles 33:1-13 - (Highlight throughout how bad it is... “That's not good” etc.)

Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. 2 And he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel. 3 For he rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had broken down, and he erected altars to the Baals, and made Asheroth, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. 4 And he built altars in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord had said, “In Jerusalem shall my name be forever.” 5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. 6 And he burned his sons as an offering in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and used fortune-telling and omens and sorcery, and dealt with mediums and with necromancers. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger. 7 And the carved image of the idol that he had made he set in the house of God, of which God said to David and to Solomon his son, “In this

house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my name forever, 8 and I will no more remove the foot of Israel from the land that I appointed for your fathers, if only they will be careful to do all that I have commanded them, all the law, the statutes, and the rules given through Moses.” 9 Manasseh led Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem astray, to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the people of Israel.

10 The Lord spoke to Manasseh and to his people, but they paid no attention. 11 Therefore the Lord brought upon them the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria, who captured Manasseh with hooks and bound him with chains of bronze and brought him to Babylon. 12 And when he was in distress, he entreated the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. 13 He prayed to him, and God was moved by his entreaty and heard his plea and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God.

God wants to forgive. It doesn't matter what we've done. If he will forgive Manassah, he will forgive you. You think what you've done is bad... Whoa.

I don't know if you've noticed, but all the stories we've read so far are from the Old Testament. (God of OT is mean, wrathful, unforgiving.) But that is not the God we see in the Old Testament. God has been always, is now, and always will be a God who forgives.

That doesn't change in the NT.

Here's one story that shows the forgiveness that Jesus, the son of God, wants to give.

Luke 7:36-50 - Sinful Woman forgiven (Give some commentary)

When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears.

Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner.”

Jesus answered him, “Simon, I have something to tell you.”

“Tell me, teacher,” he said.

“Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?”

Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.”

“You have judged correctly,” Jesus said.

Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”

Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

The other guests began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”

Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

- Jesus forgives this woman whom it isn't popular to forgive. God will even risk unpopularity to forgive someone.

- Also, did you notice that Simon is confused that Jesus says he can forgive sins. This is something only God can do. Jesus make down to heaven for this very purpose for the forgiveness of sin and reconciling us to God.

God's forgiveness motivates why he came to earth. Look how much he values it.

Jesus' Character

Peter, Jesus' disciple asks Jesus a question about forgiveness.

Matt 18:21-22 -

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

Only Two ways that we don't receive forgiveness from the Lord.

- 1) We don't ask - Not Acknowledging God. The Bible calls this Blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Matthew 12:22-32 (Don't have time to work through it.)
- 2) Those who won't forgive others as they have been forgiven by God.

God says that forgiveness is so important to him that you aren't walking with him if you don't like forgiveness. It's like forgiveness is God's best friend and if you don't like forgiveness then we won't be friends. God loves forgiveness and is characterized by it.

Listen to this promise, that the Apostle John knows he can trust in...

1 John 1:9 - If we confess our sins, he (Jesus) is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

You can put that in the bank.

Not just for Bible times but for us today.

John Newton (Slave Trader turned Anglican priest in 1700s-1800s)

Movie - Amazing Grace (Depicts the ghosts of the slave ships haunting him - the agony of his sins) But John Newton did know God's forgiveness and he wrote about it in the song that we sang today:

Amazing Grace -
Amazing grace how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now I'm found

Was blind but now I see

But I have one more story I want to share that highlights God's forgiveness:

In Luke 23, after being beaten and condemned to death

Jesus Crucified

Luke 23:32-48

32 Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. 33 And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. 34 And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments. 35 And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!" 36 The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine 37 and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" 38 There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

39 One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" 40 But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." 42 And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." 43 And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."

The Death of Jesus

44 It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, 45 while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. 46 Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last. 47 Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!" 48 And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts.

- Even as they are hurting him, he pleads to God for their forgiveness. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

- Jesus died on the cross as an eternal offering of forgiveness for our sins. Jesus himself took the punishment or debt we deserve, so we could have a restored relationship with God.

Take second to just meditate on Christ's amazing forgiveness.

- You know something I had not realized until I prepared for this sermon, there is not one place in the Bible that I could find where God refuses forgiveness to someone who asked for it. Not once.

- But there are many people in the Bible who refused to ask for God's forgiveness.

He is waiting, hoping to forgive every person of all the wrongs and evils you have ever done. I want ask you to accept this part of God's character today. Ask him for forgiveness.

He has given you an eternal invitation in Christ.

Pray for people to receive the forgiveness of Christ.