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Good morning. It is indeed a delight to be here this morning. We're excited to be able to spend this time. We are here on a two-month furlough. We are coming toward the end of that two-month furlough and we are growing weary. We leave on the 18th to head back to Lusaka. We started off in Dallas and then drove from there to New Orleans and spent a couple of days in New Orleans and then went to Jackson and spent about a week there, a little over a week there with the brand new grandbaby who was born on the 28th of December. So we're excited to be there, and providentially to be there right at that time a couple of days after he was born. And then from there, did I mention that we're driving all this? And then from there we drove over to Charlotte and spent a couple of days there ministering there. And then from there to Atlanta and a couple of days ministering there. And then after that up to Nashville. And then to Louisville, went to the Creation Museum and the Ark and had a nice little break in the middle of that. And then back down to Jackson because, you know, the grandbaby is there. And then after Jackson back over here. So pray for us. We've been, we tallied it last night because Simeon was saying how much he misses his house and his toys and his room, and we tallied it up, we are now staying at our 15th place in the last six weeks. So, yeah, there's all that, but we are excited to be back here and to be at GFBC. It was interesting, you know, when you said that, Steve, and I'm starting doing the math in my head. If that was that, that was 13 years ago that the Lord started this work and that by his grace still here, still serving, still carrying out the mission and the vision and the calling that God has placed on this work. And so for that we praise the Lord. Amen?

If you have your Bibles with you, open them this morning to the book of Ephesians. Ephesians 4. If there was one word, if I could only use one word to describe and to define Christians and Christianity, it'd be difficult. It would be difficult to do, and I think for most of us we'd kind of be torn between a few words, and grace would be one of those words that would come to mind, and salvation would be one of those words that would come to mind. But if I had to choose one, it would be the word forgiveness. That would be the word, forgiveness, because I think it encapsulates so much of what it means to be Christian both in terms of our relationship to God and in terms of our relationship to one another. It encapsulates everything. It captures everything.

I want us to look at Ephesians 4:32 and, we've looked at this verse before, we've looked at this verse together before, and I think it's incredibly important, and I want to move from, you know, before we've looked at this word and we've talked about really kind of

the mechanism of forgiveness and I want to look at it today and talk about the motivation. The motivation of forgiveness, because now moving into my.... I'm not moving into my third decade and I'm well into my, I'm almost done with my third decade of gospel ministry. Having done this for all that time, it's amazing one of the things that really changes over time in doing gospel ministry, in dealing with God's people and walking with God's people, one of the things that happens is it's kind of like parenting. Over time, you see the same things over and over and over again. Over time, you watch people go down the same roads that you've seen people go down over and over and over again. And you sit down with people and this is something, this is not what happens in the pulpit, and I remember hearing these things early on in the ministry. You know, you go into the ministry early on and you think the ministry is all about the pulpit. Nothing could be further from the truth. Nothing could be further from the truth. The ministry is not all about the pulpit. Ministry is all about the counseling room, the kitchen table, that place where you sit down and take these things and apply them in real life circumstances; those times where you sit with people and you look them in the eye and you say to them, "I know this road that you are about to walk down. I've seen people walk down this road 1,000 times before. I can tell you where this road ends. I can tell you what's going to happen." And they look at you and you can tell by the look in their eye they're going down that road because they think they're different. And what's different is, after three decades of ministry, here's what you have: you have the opportunity to be there when people finish that road and come back and say, "Why didn't you warn me?" And you can say, "Well, actually I did." "Well, why didn't you warn me more?" "Actually I did." "Well, why didn't you just grab me and throw me on the ground and shake me?" Because trust me, that close but that wouldn't have helped you. And if there's one road, there's one road that you see over and over and over again that derails Christians, it's this road of unforgiveness. It's this road of unforgiveness. You see, people walk away from marriages and walk out on their families because of unforgiveness. You see young people walk away from home and go down horrific roads that threaten to derail and destroy them all because of unforgiveness. You see friendships that are thrown away because of unforgiveness. You see people who walk away from the church, from the Lord, because of unforgiveness. This is the crux of the matter. This is everything both in terms of our relationship to God and in terms of our relationship to one another.

So let's look at this here. Ephesians 4:32. Let's back up to verse 25 and read that whole paragraph.

25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. 26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil. 28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. 29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and

slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Amen. Hallelujah. Praise the Lord. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other as God in Christ forgave you.

First, I want to define forgiveness here and then make a few observations about forgiveness in this text and then some applications of it. When we talk about forgiveness, one of our biggest problems with forgiveness is we don't define forgiveness correctly, and forgiveness is more than just a statement or more than just a lack of hostility. Forgiveness means cancelling a debt. Forgiveness means cancelling a debt. The classic example is, you know, you have something of mine that you have borrowed, right, you have my phone that you've borrowed. We have these things, we take these things everywhere. I don't know why anyone would borrow anyone else's phone because you can't ever have it more than a couple feet away from you, but let's just go with it, right? You borrowed my phone and then you destroyed my phone. Forgiveness is not me saying, "You know what? Okay, so I forgive you," meaning, "I'm not going to do bad things to you right now like I would like to. I'm going to keep a level head and level voice, you know, right, I forgive you. I forgive you, right? Just buy me another phone and we're good." Actually, by definition forgiveness means you don't have to buy me another phone because forgiveness means I cancel the debt that you owe. And this is huge. This is huge. This is one of our biggest issues and one of the biggest problems with this question of forgiveness because we think, "I forgive you," means, "I'm not going to give full vent to my anger. I have forgiven you because I didn't slap you, I didn't spit on you. I forgive you but you're going to pay." That is not forgiveness. Forgiveness means the debt is cancelled.

Well okay, but how do we translate that into interpersonal relationships, right, because, I mean, you know, there's no money that exchanges hands in these interpersonal relationships, there no... How then do I cancel the debt? Here's where the rubber meets the road. The way that we punish one another, the way that we express unforgiveness toward one another is by withholding attention, affection, or honor. That's the price that we make one another pay. Withholding attention, affection, or honor. That's how we punish. "I'm angry with you. I don't want to see you right now. Get out of my face." That means I am punishing you and making you pay by withholding my attention from you. "I don't even want to see you right now." Or maybe it's not withholding attention, maybe it's withholding affection. "You can have my attention, but there will be no warmth from me, no affection from me. You will know by the stone-hard look on my face, you will know by the coldness with which I deal with you that I am withholding my affection from you right now. I forgive you." Oh, thank you. Kiss on the cheek. Nope. You're paying. That's not forgiveness. Or withholding honor. Classic example of this one is my parents weren't great parents, so okay fine, what are you going to do? Your father wasn't a great father, your mother wasn't a great mother, what are you going to do? "Well, I'm going to withhold honor." How are you going to withhold honor? "It's their birthday. I'm not going

to call them." Can't say amen, you ought to say ouch. "I'm going to withhold that because they don't deserve it. That's the way that I'm going to punish them."

You see, these are the ways in interpersonal relationships that we make one another pay. So if we define forgiveness wrongly, then here's what we end up doing, right, because forgiveness would mean, "I'm not going to withhold affection, attention or honor from you." Right? But because we're wrong about what forgiveness means, something happens and we say with our mouth, "I forgive you," meaning, "I'm not going to throw scalding hot water on you, and I'm not going to, you know, run a key down the side of your car. But I am going to withhold attention, affection and honor," which means I say you're forgiven but you're not. This is why something happens at church. We get upset. "I won't show up." Why? Because not showing up is a means of withholding attention, affection and honor and letting whoever I'm upset with at church know that I'm upset and you must pay. You following? This is what unforgiveness looks like in interpersonal relationships.

This is what destroys friendships, this is what destroys marriages, this is what destroys relationships, withholding attention, affection and honor, and there are sophisticated ways of doing this, right? You can do this in a number of ways, you know? The Super Bowl is on today, I don't know if you guys realize this, the Super Bowl is today, right? But you can do little things like I have known people who decide to root for one team because somebody that they're mad at likes the other. That's just mean, right? How about, "Hey, who you got in the Super Bowl?" "Well, definitely not Los Angeles because my mother is from Los Angeles and you know how mad I am with her." But this is how ridiculous it gets.

So now that we are on the same page about what this thing is, let's look here and make some observations about it from this text. And again, let me just say this up front, and unfortunately I have to say this up front because whenever you talk about forgiveness, there's somebody who's sitting there right now and you're already upset with me because your entire existence is rooted in the unforgiveness that you hold against someone. Your entire life is defined by the bitterness that you have because of what happened to you in your past and you're mad at me right now because, you know in your heart of hearts that if you were to ever forgive and let go of that bitterness, you'd have to find another way to define yourself. You're mean and nasty to people, but it's okay because you had trauma in your childhood. You're stuck in a rut and can't and won't move, but it's okay because you had a bad experience in your past. And right now you're sitting there and you're like, "I can't believe he's making light of my situation." I don't even know your situation but I don't have to know your situation because I know what's in the book. But if that's you, just hold on and ask yourself this question: why would you be offended because I'm pressing this issue? "I've had these conversations before and people who just don't understand my pain and are always telling me to get over it like I'm the one who..." The words didn't come out of my mouth because guess what? Forgiveness and getting over it are two very different things. Amen? Like I said, just forget about it. I didn't say that. Forgive and forget. That's not you know what, maybe in Second Hesitations you find that, but that's not in the real Bible. Forgive and forget is not in the real Bible. Amen? That's not in the real Bible, that's in the made-up Bible, right? That's in the book of

Hezekiah, or something like that. But forgive and forget is not in this text because human beings weren't made to forget. Amen somebody. We weren't made to forget. When human beings start forgetting things, we're malfunctioning. I guess the medical professionals in the audience who are going like... You know who you are.

So no forgetting. Here's the other thing: forgetting takes the glory out of forgiving. That's not where the power is. The power is not in this individual who has wronged you in some way coming into your presence and you looking at them like there's no memory of what... No, the power in forgiveness is when there is that very real memory, that very visceral experience, and yet in the midst of by the power of God, by the grace of God, you relinquish any right that you might think you have to punish that person. That is the power of biblical forgiveness. Not in forgetting.

Look at the verse and make a couple of observations. Kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you. A couple of things. 1. This text here and the context is about forgiveness within the parameters of the body of believers. This is not about us forgiving people outside. By the way, there's more than enough biblical evidence that we're supposed to forgive people outside, amen? A couple of times we've referred in the catechism and in the end of our prayer time, right, to what's commonly referred to as the Lord's Prayer, right? "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Amen? In Mark 11, Jesus says if you stand praying, right, and you have anything against anyone, anything against anyone, forgive. If you have anything against anyone, forgive. No exceptions. Amen? Forgive. But the context here is forgiveness amongst the family of God, forgiveness amongst the people of God and really the whole paragraph is about that.

Let's look at the paragraph again and pay close attention to what's happening here. "Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another." What is that? That's the church, and I would argue that it's not a leap at all to apply this to the family, especially to the marriage relationship, amen, being members of one another, one flesh union, okay? You can do that.

So but next, "Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger, give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." Again, "Let all bitterness be put away from you, along with all malice." This is within the church and the real key to that is found in verse 30, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." And this is one of those places where scripture interprets scripture, right? We've heard so many explanations of what that, "Well, I'm grieving the Holy Spirit, that's this, that's that, that's the other." You know, we were talking about phones earlier. I've been in churches where, you know, they scroll across the screen, right, that's, you know, "Silence your cellphones. You don't want to

grieve the Holy Spirit." Oh, that's what that? Cell phones, who knew, right? Silence crying children, you know, because we don't want to grieve the Spirit. Do this. Do that because we don't want to grieve the Spirit.

Contextually, it's not rocket science to figure out what's happening here. Go back if you will and look at verse 29. "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths," literally acidic words, words that corrode like acids, like acid, words that tear down like acid. Don't let those words come out of your mouth, "but only such as is good for building up as fits the occasion that it may give grace to those who hear." Has there been a reference to building before this? Maybe a reference to building that has something to do with the Holy Spirit? I don't know. Maybe at the end of chapter 2. Chapter 2, verse 19, "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit." So in chapter 4 we have language that says don't use words that corrode like acid and tear down because that grieves the Spirit. At the end of chapter 2 we see the Spirit building a structure. Huh? How would we be grieving the Spirit by using those corrosive words? By tearing down what he's building. What is he building? A body of believers who belong to Christ and belong to one another. So this forgiveness that we're looking at in verse 32, it is forgiveness within the context of the body of Christ, within the context of our relationships with one another, belonging to one another as fellow citizens in the kingdom of God. Again, we're not negating our forgiveness of people outside. There's more than enough evidence throughout the Bible that we're called and commanded to do that, but this is specific.

Notice also he says, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted." So forgiveness happens within the context of this kindness and tenderheartedness that we have toward one another within the body. It is part of a broader expression of our union and communion with one another. We belong to each other. Look again in verse 25, "Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another." We belong to each other. We're members of each other. Don't tear one another down. We're being built into a dwelling place for God.

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted. Turn with me to the right and look at the book of Colossians, Colossians, 3. Same author, very similar expression. Colossians 3. Look there beginning in verse 12. Colossians 3:12, "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful." Same idea. This forgiveness that is being commanded is not just being commanded out of nowhere, this forgiveness that is being commanded is part of the environment that is cultivated when we understand that we belong to each other. By the way, that makes forgiveness more important and more necessary.

One of the great ironies is this belief that true love ought to require less forgiveness, and I wish I could say that this was something that was just a problem in young marriages or in new marriages, but it's not. This foolishness lasts for decades, right? You would think that this sin would be gone by now. Really? Why? You would think that we wouldn't keep sinning against each other like this. Really? Why? Are you not fallen anymore? Hello somebody. "Or if you really loved me, you wouldn't keep sinning against me in the same ways." Actually the opposite is true. Think of it this way, let me try to turn it into a mathematical equation. Let's say that I sin, it's actually more accurate to say that you perceive my sin once per three interactions. I sin more frequently than that. But let's say that you perceive my sin once for every three interactions that we have with one another. Well, if we only interact with one another three times a month, then you only perceive my sin against you once a month. That ain't bad. Amen? But what if we interact three times a day? My rate of sin hasn't changed, your rate of perceiving my sin hasn't changed, what has happened is we spend more time together. It's sort of like there's a lot of people who believe that there's more floods now than there has ever been before, right, because you hear about these floods all the time, and it's like it's just, "It's the end, y'all. It's the end. The flood, did you hear about that, there was another flood, a whole village flooded." Statistically there are not more floods now than there have been in the past but do you know what there are more of? Cameras and news stories. A hundred years ago if there was a flood in some small village in Pakistan, you never would have heard about it, you'd lived and died and never heard about it. But today if there is a flood in a remote place that you can't even pronounce, it's on the news and you see it. It's not that it's happening more frequently, you're just being informed of it more frequently.

So what's happening is when we are in relationship with one another and when the relationship is real relationship with one another, it's not that sin is becoming more frequent, it was always there but our proximity and the frequency of our interaction makes us more aware of it. By the way, married people, please hear me right now. It is sheer and utter folly to believe that if your spouse really loved you they wouldn't keep sinning against you. That's actually the opposite of the truth. It is the love that you have for one another and your proximity to one another that makes you there more frequently when the sin happens. It's not that your spouse loves other people more than they love you, they just don't see them as much. Amen? By the way, those of you who are considering possible relationships with people and you think they're the most amazing, awesome, talk to people who interact with them more than three times a month. Just saying, right?

So that's why this is so incredibly important because as believers, and I'm not talking about, I'm not talking about people who just happen to share the same parking lot every week because you can have that, right? You can have a circumstance where all you do is share the same parking lot every week and where, you know, you meet because there are those churches and there are those environments where you meet somebody out at the mall and, you know, or you see their parking sticker and, "Wait a minute, you go to that church? Yeah, I go to that church too." Really? Which service do you go to? "Well, I go to this one." Oh well, I go to that service. Now I'm not talking about that, I mean when

we're sharing life together, when we're having more than three interactions a month where we're actually getting to see one another's sin. I'm talking about when we live in the home together.

Here's the way we normally think about it and this is what gets us. We're in this environment where we're spending more time together, we're in this environment where I'm seeing more of your sin than I've seen before, that means you have an obligation to sin less. Actually it means I have an obligation to forgive more. Do you see the difference? I have an obligation to forgive more. You don't have an obligation to sin less. By God's Grace, I pray that you do, amen? But intimate relationships don't give me the right to look at you and say that if this relationship is going to work, you have to sin less. It gives me the obligation. And notice what the text says, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, sinning less against one another." No. Greater intimacy requires spreading forgiveness and it's unfortunate that many people only learn this in that third or fourth marriage because they got married the first time and the assumption was if it was true love, if this was the right person, then there wouldn't be this much sin and and they would sin less. And then they got married again and and now, wow, I've got a problem, but my problem is I keep choosing the broken ones. Again, my problem is my choice, right? There's no problem with me. And so they get rid of this one and then they get married again and all of a sudden at some point, at some point it just dawns on them, "Wait a minute, there's something consistent in this equation. There is a common denominator, and it's not my choices, it's me." The second or third marriage, the fourth or fifth church. And unfortunately, for many people, what happens in that is they don't just, they don't start saying, "Wait a minute, I have a forgiveness problem." No, no, no, no, no. The church has a problem. "That church had a problem, now that church had a problem, now this church has a problem. I'm done with church because there's just obviously not one out there that gets it."

Another observation and hopefully it will help this makes sense and we can understand where the problem lies. "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you." There's two sides to this. We forgive because we are forgiven and we can forgive because we are forgiven. But first thing is this: you are forgiven. You are forgiven and this is crucial because it kills the hypocrisy. It kills the hypocrisy because the hypocrisy is this, the hypocrisy is everyone out there has a sin problem and everyone out there is getting on my nerves because they sin so much and they require so much of me in terms of dealing with them. But when you understand that you have been forgiven, when you flip that and you recognize that you are not this pristine, sinless person, going through life, being bombarded with the sins of others, but that you are a sinner who has also had to be forgiven, it changes your perspective. You sin. The Apostle Paul referred to himself as the chief of sinners and he wrote two-thirds of the New Testament. Amen?

You sin. You need forgiveness. And one of the great ironies in all of this is that when, again because we've all got our own blind spots, we've all got our own, you know, burdens to bear in terms of our sinfulness but this one tends to be quite ironic because this one, that individual who keeps going from relationship to relationship and cutting

people off because everybody is just bombarding them with all of their sin, this one doesn't see that their greatest sin is unforgiveness and that the problem isn't that there are so many sinners out there but the problem is that there's so little forgiveness in here. And the cure for that is the cross. Recognize that Jesus did not have to shed less blood for you. Recognize that when you just get completely exasperated and put out with the sins of other people, with the sins with which they are bombarding you, with the failures that you see over and over and over again because you miss nothing in terms of the failures of others, as you're doing that, go back and visit the cross again and look into your Savior's face and your sin that was nailed there and your forgiveness that had to be purchased there. And then there's the flip side of it, we are able to forgive because we're forgiven. This changes not only the way I view my sin, it changes the way that I view yours. Christ died for that.

Unforgiveness is sinister. Unforgiveness does a number of things. 1. Unforgiveness is costly. Emotionally it's costly because it costs me a lot emotionally to constantly punish you. Man, that's a lot. I've got to remember what you did and how much you owe, how much attention, affection, and honor I need to withhold until I feel like I've made you pay enough for your sin. That's costly. That's draining. Amen? Which is why eventually we just say, "Forget it. I'm done with this relationship, it's costing me too much." That's costly.

It also costs you emotionally because you're on a hamster wheel that you never get off of. It doesn't fix people. What does James tell us? The anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. "I'm going to withhold attention, honor, respect, affection from you because I want to inflict as much emotional damage upon you as I possibly can so that next time you're afraid to do this again, because I do not believe that Christ sanctifies, I believe my anger does. I'm not interested in you becoming more like Christ. I'm interested in you being afraid to experience my wrath so that you don't do that again." That's costly.

It's also costly in terms of a relationship with God because here's what three decades of pastoral ministry has also taught me: people who are unforgiving toward others always question their own salvation because they think God's forgiveness is the same as theirs. You are an exacting and unforgiving person and you believe that that's exactly who God is, and you withhold attention, affection and honor from people when they sin against you, and when you recognize sin in your own heart, you automatically assume that God is going to withhold attention, affection, and honor from you because he's going to deal with you in the same way. That's costly. That's costly.

It's also costly in terms of your theology. Your theology gets completely warped because ultimately here's what you're saying, what you're saying is, "That thing that you just did to me, the blood of Jesus is enough to satisfy the Triune God but I require more. The one who spoke heaven and earth into existence can forgive you for that because of the death of his Son, however, I have higher standards than the Creator of the universe. He requires the death of his Son. That's fine for him, but I require you looking at this face and hearing this voice. I require you feeling alienated from me. I require you feeling fill in the blanks.

because Christ dying on the cross is not enough for me. It may be enough for God, but it's not enough for me." How are you going to be able to have and sustain an appropriate understanding of doctrine and theology iff that's the way that you view forgiveness and that's the way you view God? You can't.

And finally, it's going to kill your compassion. One of the things that this does, that this, that cultivating this forgiveness does, is it creates compassion. "I recognize that I'm forgiven, and now you've sinned against me, and I recognize that you need the forgiveness that I've experienced. I keep seeing this same sin from you and I become compassionate towards you because I know what it looks like and what it feels like to wrestle with a same sin." Amen? And now all of a sudden, instead of becoming embittered toward you, I'm driven. I'm driven to my knees. I'm driven to the cross on your behalf. And it changes things. Changes things.

So there are those observations. What about these applications? Just one really. Forgive. You have been forgiven, you've been forgiven so you can forgive. By God's grace you can forgive. What does that mean? The forgiveness that Christ has purchased for you on the cross has transformed you and you now have the ability to forgive, to be reconciled. Again, go back in the same book, look at Ephesians 2, beginning in verse 13. This will be the last one we look at. "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father." This is what the cross has done. The cross has made peace between me and God, and in turn it has made peace between me and you. I am forgiven, therefore I can forgive. I can be reconciled to you because I've been reconciled to God through the cross of Jesus Christ. My sins have been forgiven and I've been granted a new nature and I've been made at peace with you, and your sins, even the sins that you commit against me, are under the blood of Christ. What do I have left to hold onto? What do I have left to hold onto?

Now again, some caveats. because I know that these are here and the fact that I need to give these caveats support my argument that this is so crucial because whenever you talk about forgiveness there's the people out there who are like, "Again, you don't know what was done to me, and you're saying I should just..." Couple of things. 1. There is a difference between forgiveness and reconciliation. There is a song I remember when I was growing up and the whole time that I was preparing this song kept coming into my mind. You've got to be careful what you listen to because it'll come back to you. When I was growing up, some of you know this, "I found love on a two-way street and lost it on a lonely highway." Don't worry about it if you're not old enough to know that song. It wasn't that great of a song but it speaks to this. Reconciliation is a two-way street. Forgiveness is a lonely highway. In other words, to reconcile, right, because some people, "You know what, I would forgive but they haven't asked for forgiveness." Hm, not

required. Not required. "Well, but doesn't he say if your brother sins against you, you know, seven times in a day and asks for forgiveness then you forgive?" Yes, yeah, actually he does. He does. He does in a text that has to do with discipline. It has to do with discipline. However, again in Mark 11, if you're praying and have anything against anyone, forgive. He doesn't say if you're praying and while you're praying somebody comes and asks you for forgiveness. No, if you're praying and you have anything against anyone, forgive.

Forgive. You can forgive a dead person and some of us in here today need to because there's somebody who hurt you, a parent, a grandparent, whomever, I said whomever, there's somebody who's hurt you and they're not even alive anymore and you're holding onto and harboring unforgiveness, destroying your own life. It's been said holding on to unforgiveness against another person is like you drinking poison hoping they die.

Forgive. Forgiveness is not necessarily reconciliation. Reconciliation requires that other person's cooperation, amen? That's the only way we can reconcile is with cooperation, and we pray for reconciliation but we can't make people reconcile. However, forgiveness means, "I give up my right to punish you. I give up my right to punish you. I'm not punishing you." Forgiveness and reconciliation are two very different things, amen?

Also forgiveness does not negate our obligation to confront sin. If your brother sins, rebuke him. It's forgiven, right? That's the same text that we were just talking about. It's shorthand for the discipline process, right? We still do that, amen? We still do that but there's a difference between someone sins and it's brought to their attention and there's a rebuke and withholding attention, affection, honor, respect, so that they feel punished for what they did. There's a difference between those. Seek reconciliation. Pray for reconciliation. Be open to reconciliation. But while you're seeking and praying and being open, forgive. Don't withhold attention. Don't withhold affection. Don't withhold honor.

Forgive. Children, forgive, because children do this as well. You wanted something and you asked Mom and Dad for it and Mom and Dad said no, and so you fold your arms and put your head up in the air and you turn your head. What is that? "I'm withholding attention. I'm withholding affection. I'm withholding honor and I want you to see through my posture that I'm now punishing you, Mom and Dad, for not giving me what I want." That's unforgiveness.

Husbands and wives, are you withholding attention, affection, honor from one another? I've seen it go on for so long that the couple can't even agree on what the original cause was. They've been at it for so long that if you separate the two of them and ask them, one will tell you that it's because of this and the other will tell you that it's because of that. One of them will go back five years and the other one will go back seven. Forgive.

Parents, have your children sinned against you? That's a rhetorical question, by the way. Forgive. We don't use the withholding of attention, affection and honor as punishment. Forgive.

Has your church, some member of your church, some leaders in your church sinned against you? Forgive. Forgive and pray to God for reconciliation, and not just outward forgiveness.

Back to the Super Bowl again and I only use this because it's like the new national holiday, right? But I don't even remember when I was having the conversation, but you know, someone was talking about one of the great things about, you know, football and there was some penalty that happened and it was a pretty big penalty at a pretty big point in the game, and you know, a guy had jumped offsides or grabbed a facemask and done whatever and it was costly, like about to cost them the game, you know? There was a slap on the backside, a pat on the head. "Let's go," right? And someone just sort of commented on how, you know, we can learn from that, you know. I'm like, "I hope not." No, man, you just, you know, you forgive and you just move on. No, that's not forgiveness because in a couple of days, actually the next day, they're going to have a film session and that's going to be played over again and again and again, and if it's in the NFL, there may be fines handed out. So yeah, it looks like forgiveness in the moment because there's a slap on the backside and the pat on the head, "Come on, let's go," on to the next play, but the reality is that's window dressing and that's just expediency in the moment to get through this, but everybody knows you're going to pay for that tomorrow.

Don't let that be your family. Don't let that be your marriage. Don't let that be your church. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other as God in Christ forgave you. And if you're here today and you have not experienced this forgiveness in Christ, then before you worry about forgiving others will you recognize your desperate need for forgiveness from God because that's the starting point, because apart from this forgiveness that you receive from God, you are incapable of the kind of forgiveness that's required in this text. Flee to Christ and be forgiven.