

Love Forgives

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I invite you to take God's Word and turn with me to that monumental chapter, that Mount Everest of a chapter, 1 Corinthians chapter 13, and today we come to the end of verse 5. And as you're turning there, I just trust that this day your heart is open to the Word of God, that your life is under the Lordship of Christ, and that there is a desire for God the Holy Spirit to work in you that which we will look at today.

It's been my observation over the last several weeks as people have come up to me and responded in different ways to these messages, that it's those who seem to me to be the least ones who need this are the ones who are the most convicted, and the ones who just pass me by and there is no response that we even look at the Bible together, and they are the ones, to me, at times it seems there needs to be some more love in their life and more of a demonstration, not just towards me, but to other brothers and sisters in the Lord. So I don't know where you find yourself in this, but I trust that today your response to this will be, "This is exactly what I needed in my spiritual life today. God has dialed it in exactly. This is where I am. This is what I need. I desperately need to have more of this in my spiritual life." And there really is no reason for any of us here today not to respond in this manner to the Word of God. I trust that you will understand that there is a target on your heart, there is a red laser from heaven that is directed at your soul and at your heart, and that God is speaking through his Word to your heart and to your life this day, and I trust that you're all here today and that you're all in regarding the Word of God, that you're not distracted, that you're not divided in interest or focus, but that you give the Lord your undivided attention and that you ask God to incorporate into your life this which each and every one of us so needs to have a part of our basic Christianity. There's not a one of us here today who has advanced beyond this. In fact, there's not a one of us here today who is living up to this and by God's grace, we need to make some progress. We need to make some advancement towards this. We need to gain ground on this.

And so I want us to look at the end of verse 5. We're in 1 Corinthians 13, this chapter on love, and we've slowed down to look at each and every aspect of love. I tend to be very doctrinal in my preaching and very theological and that is the foundation of all preaching, and when we come to a practical section like this, we really need to slow down because we're so doctrinally and theologically precise from other passages. We need this to round us out. We need this to fill in the gaps in our lives. So for that reason, we are giving careful attention to what Paul writes. At the end of verse 5, we want to look at this last

aspect of love in verse 5, there will be more in verses 6 and 7, but Paul writes love does not take into account a wrong suffered. Few words, simple thought, so challenging to implement and to live.

Claire Barton is well known in history as a nurse who gave herself selflessly and sacrificially to the care of others, and she would become the founder of the American Red Cross. And one day, someone approached Ms. Barton for some help. She gave her entire life to help others as a nurse, and as she was preparing to give her help to a person, a friend intervened and said, "Clara, you are not going to help that person, are you? Do you not remember what they did to hurt you?" To which she responded, "No, I distinctly remember forgetting it." And that is precisely what love does, it distinctly remembers forgetting wrongs that are done against us. Love has the capacity to put a matter behind it and to move on. Love burns its bridges behind it and does not continue to want to go back and to carry an offense. Having once forgiven another, love thinks no more of it. Love does not meditate on the offense. It does not nurse a grudge. It does not contemplate how to get back or how to get even. Instead, love looks to the cross and beholds God's forgiveness of us and then demonstrates the very same love to others.

This is critically important because we all need to learn to practice forgiving others. There is not a one of us here today who does not have wrongs committed against us. We live in a fallen world. We ourselves commit offenses against others, and others commit offenses against us. And whether it be in our immediate family, whether it be our extended family, whether it be our church family, whether it be with circles of friends, every one of us in this house of worship today have had wrongs committed against us, and in many cases, these wrongs have brought hurt and harm. It is our fleshly tendency to internalize these wrongs suffered and to make a permanent record and note of them and in reality keep score. It is our fallen nature to hold the matter against the offender until repayment has been made but Paul writes in these words that love does not take into account a wrong suffered. This is our focus today. This is what the Corinthians so desperately needed to learn because if anyone ever so much as breathed on one of these Corinthians, they knew what it was to hold that against that person and not let it go. And so every one of us here today needs to learn this same lesson.

This is what the Word of God says, love does not take into account a wrong suffered. It is unloving and ungodly and unChrist-like to take into account a wrong suffered. Now I have four headings that I want to look at this under today and I want you to consider, first, the spiritual standard. This is the standard that the Apostle Paul sets for the church at Corinth and for every church and for every believer. This is the 9th of 15 descriptions of love and I want us to look at the spiritual standard. I want us to look now just for a moment at what these words say and what these words mean. Please note, love does not take into account a wrong suffered. Some of you here today have an ESV translation, and while that is a good translation of the Bible, it's very unfortunate at this point. It's a very loose and poor translation. The ESV says love is not irritable or resentful. That totally misses the point of what Paul is saying here. The Holman translation says, love does not keep a record of wrongs. That is exactly the point and it is the point that the New American Standard makes here, love does not take into account a wrong suffered.

Now, this verb, do you see it "take into account" if you have the New American Standard translation as I do? That is the main verb. In fact, all 15 of these descriptions of love come in the form of a verb. It's not a noun, it's a verb. And "take into account" is a bookkeeping term. It's a mathematical term. I'm going to pronounce the word only so that you may hear an English word in it. It is the Greek word *logizomai* and you can almost hear the English word *logarithms* in it. It's a mathematical calculation, that is what this word precisely means. It has nothing to do with resentment or irritability; those are totally other Greek words. This word is love does not calculate and count and post to an account and post to a record a wrong that is done against us. The image is of an accountant, of a bookkeeper who keeps precise records of financial transactions with a view to paying someone back. The bookkeeper opens the books to review what has been received and what has been spent and what is owed to someone else and the accountant must give an account for a precise calculation. He is able to give an exact amount and provide a precisely itemized list of what is owed to others. Paul's point is love does not do this. Love does not keep records. Love does not keep score. Love does not keep records of a wrong suffered.

Now, some people and to some degree every one of us here today keep a list of wrongs that we have suffered by the hands of others. We make a journal entry in our mind when we are injured by someone else. We record the offense, we record the offender, we record the place, the time, the date, the exact words spoken and we can replay it for months if not years and the deed that is done. And then we pull out our books and we review these books on a regular basis and we are reminded of the offense, and we review the offense, and we replay the offense, and we exegete the nuances of the offense and we record it with indelible ink upon the ledger of our mind. It becomes a matter of permanent record within us and whenever we see the offender, the books are opened and we want to either walk the other way, or we want to not smile, or we want to not make eye contact, or we want to not talk because the books are always open in our minds. And whenever we see this person, it just becomes re-fortified in our minds, and even when we are alone and our mind is wandering and we are just thinking in a car or sitting in the den or wherever we might find ourselves, those books are always with us and we're able to review them. When we do this, we nurse a grudge. We become resentful. A root of bitterness begins to grow within our soul. If only we could remember the Bible half as well as we remember offenses committed against us, we would have the entire Bible memorized.

An unforgiving spirit is like an acid within us that eats us alive. An unforgiving spirit is like a millstone tied around our neck that holds us back from moving forward spiritually. An unforgiving spirit leads to all other kinds of spiritual illness in our lives. Unforgiveness sours our attitude towards the church, towards people, towards whatever else is going on. An unforgiving spirit steals joy. It saps peace. It strips patience. It silences praise. It sickens the spirit. It saddens the heart. And in reality, we become the ones who suffer on a continual basis because we carry this around with us. It is a form of self-torture. It is a self-inflicted wound that goes far beyond whatever wound was inflicted upon us by someone else.

The Apostle Paul writes love does not take into account a wrong suffered. Those are strong words, beloved. He says love does not keep records of wrongs suffered. Love makes no journal entries of offenses that have been brought. Love clears the records. Love does not enter into its ledger the wrongs of others committed against it. It does not pay back the offender. It does not keep a list of faults suffered from one another. It does not keep a tally of wrongs. It has no place for resentment. It has no place for grudges. It has no place for revenge. Love does not keep score in order to settle the score. Instead, love does the complete opposite. Love forgives others. Love pardons others. Love forgets the offense. Love moves on. Love buries a matter. Love lets go of past offenses. Love rises above wrongs suffered. Love is ever ready to forgive.

I want you to see the very same word, *logizomai*. If you turn to Romans chapter 4, I want you to see how this word is used elsewhere in the New Testament because this word, *logizomai*, is really the heart of the gospel. If I wasn't preaching this right now, I would preach it tonight as we come to the Lord's Table. Romans chapter 4 is the *logizomai* chapter in the Bible. The word *logizomai* is found more in this chapter than anyplace in the entire Bible. This entire chapter is all about this Greek word *logizomai* and as we understand it as it relates to the gospel, then it becomes very simple to understand it as it relates to our sanctification and how we are to grow in grace.

In Romans chapter 4, beginning in verse 3 is the first time we see this very same Greek word and again, it has nothing to do with resentment or irritability as the ESV has it. No, it's a bookkeeping term. It is an accounting term. You'll notice it in verse 3 in the word "credited." "For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." That is the very same word that is used in 1 Corinthians 13 verse 5, "does not take into account." It does not post to the record. It does not make an entry into the journal. Doesn't credit it to someone's account when we are offended. And at the very heart of the gospel, verse 3, Abraham believed God, and God charged to the account of Abraham the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. God imputed it to that account. God deposited that righteousness into the account of Abraham. God posted it next to his name in God's bookkeeping, record keeping in heaven.

We see the very same word used in verse 4. "Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due." What he is saying is when we work for something, it's not just merely registered to us as a gift, but it is earned as a wage in what is due us, what is owed to us. But he says salvation is not like that.

Verse 5, "But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is *logizomai*, is credited as righteousness." And here's what I want us to see, to say it again, this is a bookkeeping accountant word of posting to a ledger, posting to an account.

And look at it in the next verse, verse 6, "just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God," here it is, *logizomai*, "credits righteousness apart from works." Posted as a journal entry into God's accounting in heaven.

Look at verse 8. "Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account." It's the very same verb with the "not," the negative in front of it. Blessed is the man whom God will not post to his account his sin.

Look at verses 9, 10, and 11. In rapid succession, they're all used here again, or this word is used here again. "Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, 'Faith was credited,' was posted, was deposited, "to Abraham as righteousness." Verse 10, "How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised." What that is saying is Abraham believed God in Genesis 15 and the moment he believed God, God opened his books in heaven and God credited to his account the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ before God even brought the the mode of circumcision into Abraham's life. It was already settled. Look at it again in verse 11, "he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them." And the word is used at the end of the chapter in verse 12, therefore it was also credited to him as righteousness."

Verse 23. "Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him." Look at verse 24, "but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, as those who believe in Him." If I wrote a book like this, a chapter like this, my editor would not allow me to repeat the same word again and again and again. He would tell me, use synonyms, find alternate words, stop repeating yourself. You can't keep using the same word over and over and over again. But the Holy Spirit of God directs Paul in Romans chapter 4 non-stop throughout this entire chapter to keep repeating himself and because to drive home the point with us what is the heart of the gospel, that it is not on the basis of anything that we do that we are made right with God. It is solely by faith in Jesus Christ and the moment we believe God opens the books in heaven and God posts next to our name the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. Now that was worth going through for no other reason just to hear the gospel rehearsed again.

Now this is the very same word, the very same word that Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 13 verse 5 that when others do wrongs against us the book must remain shut. We have no business under heaven opening the book in our little minds and recording a wrong suffered so that we can hold it against somebody. That is unchristian. It is ungodly. And yet we as Christians carry around certain things that somebody has done to us and we won't let it go.

Paul says love does not take into account a wrong suffered. Listen, it's a whole lot easier to preach on this than it is to live it. It's a whole lot easier for you to take notes on this than to live it. And we'll talk in a little bit of what must take place in our lives in order for us to do this. But before we move on, how does this need to be worked out in your life? Are your books clean? Are there any journal entries against anybody breathing on planet Earth? Is there someone in your family you need to forgive? Is there someone in this church you need to forgive? Every once in a while, I'll catch wind of some little feud that kind of is going on, that somebody, you know, whatever it is, it basically rises to the level

of someone wanted the air conditioning up, someone else was too cold, and now there's this feud going on. You need to clear the books of anything and everything and live with a clear conscience.

Now, number two, the scriptural support. We've already had the scriptural teaching, but I want to bolster this. I want to support this now. Number two, the scriptural support and this truth is taught throughout the Scripture that we must forgive others who offend us. Let me walk through these as quickly as I can. Matthew chapter 6 verses 14 and 15. Jesus said, "if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But," verse 15, "if you do not forgive others," if you do not forgive other, "then your Father will not forgive you." Well, that's got my attention, I don't know about yours, because I need forgiveness. You need forgiveness. This has nothing to do with salvation. The moment we believed in Jesus Christ, there was this crediting to our account of the perfect righteousness of Christ and the once and for all, now and forever, removal of the penalty of sin. There is now therefore no condemnation for them who are in Christ Jesus. But what this verse relates to concerns our relationships within the body of Christ and the intimacy of our fellowship with the Father, and if we will not forgive others their offenses towards us and if we just want to even just pout about it and put on this stoic face and not smile at other people and not be warm and not be hospitable and not be gracious to that person or to that family and just kind of blackball them from our little circle of fellowship, then Jesus said, "All right, if that's the way you want it, then My Father, and I know My Father very well, My Father will not forgive you." So you need to be a big-time forgiver if you're going to have big-time forgiveness, and if you're a miserly little forgiver and just people have to get on their knees almost and crawl back to you, then that's exactly what you're going to have to do to God and you've got a whole lot more sins to deal with with God than you have towards other people or they towards you. It's a powerful text. Hear it one more time. If you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions. There's no exception clause. There are no side conditions. There's nothing else to be said.

Ephesians 4 verse 32, "Be kind to one another." That sounds just like a feel-good sermon. Be kind to one another. We need to be kind to one another. "Tender-hearted." Now, notice what follows, it's a participle that modifies the main verbs and describes how we are to be kind to one another. It describes how to be tender-hearted to one another. And we here in the South especially need to hear this because we are great at smiling at people while we hate them in our hearts. Up in the North, if they hate you, they just spit in your face. They don't smile at you. Out on the West Coast, they just shove you into some volcanic eruption. But here in the South, we just smile at everybody while we have a dagger behind our back and we write it off as, "Well, I was kind to that person. I was nice to that person." No, you weren't. You were the devil to that person.

Now look at verse 32, "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted." Now, how are you going to do that? Notice what follows, "forgiving each other." If you don't forgive others, you're not kind, you're unkind. If you don't forgive someone else, you're not tender-hearted, you're hard-hearted no matter how much you smile. "Forgiving each other, just as God in

Christ also has forgiven you." And by the way, these are in the imperative. We are commanded by God to be kind and tenderhearted in this manner.

Colossians 3 verse 13 is the parallel text to the Ephesians text and it says, "bearing with one another, and forgiving each other." And again, it's in a participial form which means it modifies the main verb and the main verb was in verse 12 when he says that we are to put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, and now, bearing with one another, forgiving one another. This is the way that we are humble and kind and patient towards one another, is by forgiving one another.

Let me show you a great example of this, 2 Corinthians chapter 2 verse 5. We might not normally think of turning to this passage but you'll find the word "forgive" here multiple times and it is a passage that Paul will have to write to the very same church, to the Corinthians. You know, they were just an extreme church. They were never in balance. They just went from one extreme to the other extreme. They would just swing the pendulum from one side to the other. Well, there was a ringleader in the church at Corinth who sparked a rebellion against Paul, rose up against Paul and gathered other mindless people against Paul and the Corinthians finally by Paul's leadership, exercised church discipline on this man and had this man put out of the church and Paul commends them, "You've done the right thing." Well, lo and behold the man actually repents. I mean how many times does that ever happen? The man actually repented. He got right with God, got right with the church, and realized the insanity of his actions. Well, the Corinthians were so committed now to defend Paul in this matter, they won't forgive the man that they put out of the church. Now, they should have received the prodigal home. They should have killed the fatted calf, put a ring on his finger and received him with open arms, but they kept their arms folded and they would not receive the man back into their fellowship and Paul has to say to them, "You need to show some forgiveness. I mean, thanks for sticking up for me but this has gone way too far. The man has repented."

So look, beginning in verse 5, I've already paraphrased everything it says, but let me just read this. It's never stopped me before. "But if any has caused sorrow," he's referring to this one man in the church, this ringleader, this self-appointed spiritual man, "if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree in order not to say too much to all of you." In other words, he's brought heartache and pain to the entire congregation.

Verse 6, "Sufficient for such a one is this punishment," and his punishment was his excommunication, the matter being brought before the entire church. He was put out of the church because you're acting just like an unbeliever and so they turned him over to Satan. Verse 6, "Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority." Everyone in the church was on board with this.

Verse 7, "so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow." Well, the backstory on this is the man finally does repent, but the Corinthians will not forgive him and Paul says in

verse 7, "You're causing him excessive sorrow. The man is just beating himself up now and he can't have the joy of fellowship with you."

Verse 8, "Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him." And the way they would do this would be by forgiving him.

Verse 9, "For to this end also I wrote, so that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things." Forgiveness is a test of obedience. Either you obey and forgive or you fail to obey and you are in disobedience.

Verse 10, "But one whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ." What Paul is saying here is this whole thing wasn't about me, this whole thing was about peace in this congregation and peace among all of the brothers here. It wasn't about clearing my name or it wasn't about me having any kind of peace. It was so that this church could be unified as one. It's why we brought this whole matter to the church.

Now, verse 11. I want us to see verse 11 because I did not mention verse 11," so that," here's why you're going to have to forgive him now that he's repented, "so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes." What Paul is saying is, if there is an unforgiving spirit in your heart, it is an invitation to Satan to come and establish a beachhead in your mind and in your heart. You are throwing wide open the doors of your heart and inviting the roaring lion to come in and to devour you if you will not forgive him. That's a very serious matter, that if any one of us here today does not have a fully forgiving heart towards another brother or another sister, you have the devil on the prowl after you if he has not already overtaken you and taken away your joy and taken away your peace and stripped you of spiritual power, and you're just walking around in a spiritual daze. That's what Paul is saying.

The scriptural support. Come to Matthew chapter 18. I want us to look at one last text. Matthew chapter 18 and beginning in verse 21. "Then Peter came and said to Him," said to the Lord Jesus Christ, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Now the rabbis said up to three times and so Peter is assuming that he has just won a blue medal or a blue ribbon, a gold medal, blue ribbon by saying up to seven times, like we've just pushed the fence so far out the Lord is just going to pat me on the head and commend me that I would forgive somebody up to seven times, as though he has just exponentially opened up the limits of forgiveness.

Notice what Jesus says in verse 22 in response and you can just hear Peter's jaw hit the ground. "Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.'" And as Jesus is saying this, he is intentionally saying that we must forgive others to the end of time, through all of their offenses that would be committed against us. The number seven is often the number of perfection or infinity, outer limits with no limits in the Bible and to say 70 times 7, that's in essence saying as high as the heavens are above the earth. That's how much you should forgive others. There's no limits.

And then he tells this parable. "For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king," this king is God in this parable, "who wished to settle accounts with his slaves." Do you see the accounting, bookkeeping imagery here? Wants to settle accounts with his slaves, meaning there are people who owe him money. He's been gracious. He has lent out money. It is time now to call in my accounts and for those who owe me money to repay me.

Verse 24, "When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents." Now the highest number in the Greek language is 10,000. If he was a politician today, he would say trillion. It's the highest number there is and talent, 10,000 talents, talents are far more than denarii. So a man owed him an incomprehensible amount of money that represented an infinite debt that the man could never repay in a hundred lifetimes.

Verse 25, "But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made." He sold himself into a debtor's slavery. The only collateral he had was himself and his wife and his children so he just sold the whole family into slavery in order to have some money to give to the king, and even that wasn't enough to pay off the 10,000 talents.

Verse 26, "So the slave fell to the ground," he's now appearing before the king and prostrated himself, meaning he just fell on the ground and humbled himself before him, "saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.'" You need to remember that line, that speech, because you're going to hear it again in this parable.

Verse 27, "the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt." It pictures the heart-searching repentance with which we must approach God and it pictures the generous compassion of God's forgiveness to pleading sinners who owe him an unpayable debt and God just wipes the slate clean through the perfect righteousness of his own Son, Jesus Christ. So verse 27, look at it again, "the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt."

Now verse 28, "But that slave," this one who's been forgiven this incomprehensible, unsurmountable debt, "went out and found one of his fellow slaves." Now, this is just a bunch of slaves. It's not like they're princes. It's not like they're judges. It's not like they have any prominence about them whatsoever. They're just nothing but dirt-moving slaves who just do the most menial tasks that there could be in the kingdom on behalf of the king. They're nobodies. And so this one slave who has been forgiven this insurmountable debt, now there's this other slave who owed him a hundred denarii. Well, that's far, far, far, far less than 10,000 talents. So what does he do? You would think he would say, "Well, because of the forgiveness extended to me, I now wipe your slate clean and I now have the joy of forgiving you as my master had the joy of forgiving me." Not in your life. Look what it says, "the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. 28 "he seized him and began to choke him," to put both hands around his neck and took him down to the ground and just began to hold him upside down and shake his pockets to try to get everything out of him that he possibly could and was choking him and saying, "Pay back what you owe."

"So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.'" That little speech should have triggered in his mind, "I've heard this speech before, out of my own mouth. I just said this to the Lord." But he doesn't remember. He doesn't remember the debt that has been forgiven him. All he can remember is this little five cent debt that is owed to him.

Verse 30, "he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed." He's going to extract every little thin dime out of this man that he possibly can and just grind him up till he gets it.

Verse 31, ""So when his fellow slaves," now in this parable, that's all of us. All of us are in the kingdom. The fellow slaves. When they saw what had happened, what's the effect on all the other slaves? "They were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened." This offense was grievous to all the other believers. Those of you who are parents know what this is like to see your children get into a fight and they won't make it right, and it just breaks your heart to see your own children acting so unforgiving towards one another. And so it affects all of our hearts. Whenever there's anyone in the kingdom of heaven who is not forgiving of another fellow slave, it hurts our soul. It grieves us.

Verse 32, "Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?' And his lord, moved with anger." Is God ever angry with a believer? God is angry toward all sin and it can be argued that God is more angry with sin in the life of a believer than in an unbeliever because unbelievers just act like unbelievers. The Puritans used to say are you more upset about weeds in your garden or in your neighbor's garden? You're more upset about weeds in your own garden. "His lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers." Now, please note, not the executioners, the torturers, "until he should repay all that was owed him." And the repayment in this parable is the chastening hand of God upon a believer who will not forgive a brother or a sister and who just keeps making those journal entries. Verse 35, "My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."

This parable is a family affair. It's a parable within the kingdom of heaven. It has nothing to do with, well, this man must have been lost. No, no, no, this man was in the kingdom and he has done this against another brother. This is the scriptural support and there are many other verses and texts to which we should, we could appeal. This says that we must forgive one another and number three, the specific steps. How are we to forgive others? In what manner are we to forgive others? I want to give you five words. Number one, immediately. We are to forgive others as soon as the offense is committed against us. Ephesians 4:26 and 27 says, "Do not let the sun go down on your wrath and do not give the devil an opportunity." If you go to sleep at night angry at a brother or a sister because of what they have done to you and you have not forgiven them, you are giving the devil

an opportunity of entrance into your spiritual sphere. Ephesians 4:26 and 27, you can look that up. It says, "Do not let the sun go down upon your wrath."

Number two, unconditionally. We are to forgive them whether they repent or not. We are to pardon them whether they ask for it or not. Jesus, in Luke 23, verse 34, as he's hanging upon the cross, says to the Father regarding those who have crucified him, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." No one's calling out to Jesus, "Please forgive me." No one is repenting at this point before the Lord Jesus Christ yet even in his dying breath, Jesus is unconditionally forgiving these in a relational sense.

Third, completely. To the full extent that an offense has been committed against us, to that very same extent, we are to forgive. We must forgive entirely. It must not be like some who try to take the weeds out of their yard, just cut off the top but leave the root in the dirt. No, the entire weed must come out. The entire offense must be forgiven or there will be a root of bitterness within us.

Fourth, humbly We must forgive without looking down our long nose at others. We must forgive without a self-righteous attitude. We must forgive others as God has forgiven us. And we must forgive with the attitude of, there but for the grace of God am I.

And fifth, irrevocably. We are to forgive once and for all time. The case is not to be reopened and retried in our minds. There is to be no double jeopardy, spiritually speaking. The same crime cannot be retried and guilt later applied once the matter has been settled. Once we have forgiven them, the books are closed.

Fourth and finally, the supernatural source. It is our personal responsibility. It is incumbent upon us to forgive others. This is our moral duty before God, and no one can forgive someone else on my behalf. This is something that I must do as a decisive act of my will. But God must give me grace and God must enable me to forgive. I must be totally, completely dependent upon the grace of God and the inward ministry of the Holy Spirit. If we are to forgive others, the Holy Spirit must be at work within us. The flesh forgives no one. The flesh remembers everything. The flesh makes constant journal entries of wrongs committed against us. The flesh nurtures grudges. The flesh keeps the wound open and raw but the Holy Spirit works forgiveness into our hearts. The Holy Spirit liberates our hearts and enables us to forgive and to forget. The Holy Spirit is the supernatural source for all divine enablement that we may forgive others. This is why we must be moment by moment walking by the Spirit, being filled by the Spirit, not grieving the Spirit, not quenching the Spirit, but be under the control of the Spirit of God in our lives.

If you find difficulty in doing this, as I find difficulty in doing this, it indicates that we need more and more of the Spirit's power and grace in our lives and he gives a greater grace, and all that God requires of us he gives the divine enablement to fulfill that which he expects of us. God doesn't just set the bar and tell us to jump over it and it's set so high we can't do it. God sets the bar. He will not lower the bar. He has set the bar and then he comes alongside of us and in essence puts his arm around us and enables us by his

sanctifying, strengthening grace to do that which he expects and requires of us. "For it is God who is at work within you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure," Philippians 2, verses 12 and 13. But he says, we are to work out our salvation in fear and trembling and then he says, "It is God who is at work within you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." The Holy Spirit of God is the Agent and Author, capital A, capital A, of our Christian growth and of our sanctification. We are not our own author or agent of our sanctification. We are the object of our sanctification and it is God the Holy Spirit who must grant the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, first and foremost.

So as Paul writes love does not take into account a wrong suffered, I trust that our study of God's Word today has been very clear in what the Scripture teaches and what God requires of us. May I remind us all of the joy that comes to our lives when we forgive others. May I remind us of the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, the inward subjective experience of God's peace when we do not carry about in our hearts unforgiveness. May I remind us of the divine illumination and enlightenment that we have to see to know God's will when we have put away unforgiveness. When we have an unforgiving spirit, it is like driving a car with mud on the windshield. That dirt prevents us from being able to see where we are going and prevents us from seeing the way we should take and it only causes us to run into other things and create greater harm. But when we confess our sin, he cleanses us from all unrighteousness and then we can see more clearly that the Bible, what God would have me to do, the glory of his name. No, it is the forgiveness that we extend to others that becomes a great liberator in our own spiritual lives.

If you find yourself here today without Christ, I want you to know that all of your sins have been posted to God's account in heaven. There's not a one sin that you've ever committed or will ever commit for the rest of your life but that God with impeccable bookkeeping does not have every sin recorded, and if you stand before the Lord on the last day, it says the books will be opened and every journal entry that God has recorded will be shown to you and you will understand and see why your damnation is just and right. The only hope that you have is to settle out of court. The only hope that you have is to understand what Jesus Christ did upon the cross and to commit yourself to him. Upon the cross, God took all of our sins and imputed them to the Lord Jesus Christ and charged them to his account and reckoned them to his account, and him who knew no sin God made to be sin for us. He never sinned once, yet all of my sin was deposited to him and credited to him and upon that cross, he became my sin bearer and your sin bearer upon that cross. And if we will believe upon Jesus Christ, the reality of that transaction will be recorded in our entry in heaven and the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ will be credited to our account. Think about this: our sins posted to his account at Calvary, his righteousness posted to our account when we believe upon him. Our sins laid upon him, his righteousness given to us.

Do you see this? Do you understand this? And without receiving Christ, your sins are still posted against your account in heaven and on the last day, those books will be opened. Not only every sin that you're aware of, every sin also that you have long since forgotten from junior high school, high school, college, single years, married years. The whole

record and you'll be shown that record and every sin will receive a just recompense. So much sin, so much damnation. The free offer of the Gospel is Jesus Christ took upon himself all of your sin and he offers to you the Father's forgiveness. If you will believe upon him, he will pardon you, he will forgive you, he will wipe the slate clean. If any one of us were to see the slate of our sin recorded, we would go unconscious. We would just faint. So foul, so filthy, so corrupt, the entire record of our sins posted in one journal entry against our name. There's nothing you can do to remove it. You are like that slave with 10,000 talents owed to the king and how you should humble yourself to the King today. Beg, plead, call upon him. Beg for his forgiveness. He is such a merciful King. He is such a benevolent King. He delights in wiping slates clean. But there's only one way and that is through the blood of his Son and for you to come to him in your heart and to humbly beg for his forgiveness. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, but except you repent, you shall likewise perish. Good news, bad news. Which will it be for you?