



TIME OF GRACE®

Freedom in Forgiveness: You Must Forgive EVERY Day

Study Notes

Summary

Where do you start the journey called forgiveness? In a world where so many people are hurting in so many ways, where so many relationships have been ruined by selfish choices, where do you even begin? What could possibly give you the power to forgive those who have hurt you the most?

- Four post-sin paths:
 1. _____
 - **Jeremiah 31:34:** Declares the LORD. . . . “I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”
 2. _____
 - **1 Peter 3:9:** Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult.
 - **Romans 12:17:** Do not repay anyone evil for evil.
 - **Matthew 5:43,44:** ⁴³You have heard that it was said, “Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” ⁴⁴But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.
 3. _____
 - **Hebrews 12:15:** See to it that . . . no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.
 4. _____ = The _____
_____ to let the _____ alone.
 - **1 Peter 3:9:** Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.
 - **Romans 12:14:** Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.
 - **Matthew 5:44:** But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.
- **1 Peter 2:23,24:** ²³When he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross.

- **Romans 4:7,8:** ⁷ Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. ⁸ Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them.
- **Matthew 26:28:** This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Points to Ponder

1. What “stones” have hurt you the most in your life? Looking back, which of the four paths did you choose to take? Which path are you taking today?
2. Meditate on 1 Peter 2:21-25 and list three things that make Jesus worthy of our worship.
3. **Challenge:** Share this message with a loved one who is struggling with bitterness or vengeance. Make sure to fill that conversation with God’s unconditional love.

Homework for Next Week

Read Matthew 18:15-35

Time of Grace Ministry
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Jeremiah 31:34; 1 Peter 3:9; Romans 12:14,17; Matthew 5:43-44; Hebrews 12:15; 1 Peter 2:23;
Romans 4:7,8; Matthew 26:28
June 5, 2022

Pastor Mike Novotny

I would like to talk to you today about forgiveness. And that is why Pastor Jim emailed me. If you have not met him yet, Pastor Jim is the guy on our pastoral team who is kind of known for having a really big, compassionate, empathetic heart. Most personality StrengthsFinder can attest I am pretty good at being a learner but the gift of empathy is dead last. And on Jim's StrengthsFinder is about the opposite. So, when I knew that I was going to be speaking to you about forgiveness, the first thing I did with my learner brain was to pull up a Bible search engine to type in the word forgive and to figure out how many times cover to cover in the entire Bible the words forgive, forgiveness, forgave or forgiven come up. One hundred and twenty-eight by the way if you are curious. But Pastor Jim did not immediately jump to a computer to search for the passages. His mind immediately started thinking about the people. He started thinking about you.

And if you wrote me an email to remind me that whenever you bring up the topic of forgiveness, whenever you broach that subject in church, whenever there is a paragraph or whole sermon or an entire sermon series, you start to knock on a door. And behind that door are some of the hardest things that people have ever been through. The topic of forgiveness is not like self-control or kindness or a little bit more love. The word itself implies that something bad has happened. Something very bad. Something that hurt you very deeply. And that is why when I thought about Pastor Jim's email, I decided to bring this stone. Because I thought that forgiveness is what happens, at least what God wants to happen, when you have been hit with one of these.

You know, it is when you used to be neighbors. And your neighbor would wave at you from the mailbox. And then something happened where he picked up a stone and he threw it and it hit you. And the relationship changed. Or maybe you used to have coworkers or business associates and you join your hands in a hand shake but then the associate let go of your hand and picked up a stone and they threw it. Or maybe it was with someone that you actually held hands with and took your vows with tears in your eyes to love, to respect. For better, for worse no matter what. But then someone that said they loved you, they let go and they grabbed one of these. And especially from so close. That is going to hurt.

You know some people say that sin is just sin. The Christians say that sometimes all sin is the same but I do not think that is entirely true. Some sin really hurts. Some sin is so small it is annoying and it bothers you but you forget about it an hour later. And then some sin, if it hits you, God forbid if it hits you, it can break you and wound you and scar you and change you.

Now for today, here is how I want to start. I want to teach you the four things that you can do when a stone gets thrown. Whether it is small. Whether it is big. When that hits and falls at your feet and that sin is right there. Today I want to talk to you about the four reactions you could have and the one that God hopes that you choose.

So grab a pen if you don't have one in your hand, because we are going to start with the first option when you get sinned against. And here it is, you could try to forget. You have heard that before have not you? You're supposed to forgive and forget. Good Christian people, they forgive and forget. It sounds like a nice Pinterest post, doesn't it? Some nice flowers growing out of the corners or something. It sounds good but here is my question. Is that what the Bible says? Forgive and forget. The answer is kind of. The closest passage that talks about forgiving and forgetting is actually not something that God commands you to do. It is a promise that God has made to you. This might be my favorite passage in the entire Old Testament. Jeremiah 31 says, here is what the Lord declares, "I will forgive their wickedness, and I will remember their sins no more."

So, should you do the same thing? The Bible's answer is, kind of. 1 Corinthians 13, that famous love chapter says that love is patient, love is kind, it is not easily angered, and love keeps no record of wrongs. So the people who have thrown stones at us, should we treat them like they deserve to be treated? The Bible's answer is no. Should we carry along this list of grudges and hurts and hang ups in our hearts to get them back with? The Bible's answer is no. But does that mean that if you still can remember the things that have been done to you that you have not truly forgiven? Now the answer to that question would be no. In fact, I would contend this. You know the person who really, really, really wants you to try to forgive and forget? The Devil. Because if you think deep in your soul that to forgive someone means you have to forget that it happened, guess who is going to win?

When you get thumped by terrible sin and you are bruised and you are scarred, time might heal that wound but the scar still remains. And the stone sits at your feet and how do you just forget that? The Devil would love for you to believe this guilt-inducing lie that if you have not forgotten it, you have not forgiven it. So, you must not be a forgiving person. Which means maybe that you are not even a Christian. So forgive and forget? The answer is no. God does not demand that. He does not command that. Do not treat people like they deserve to be treated but you can still remember and still forgive. So do not go down that path.

Which means we are ready to explore our second path. Here is something else you could do after you have been sinned against. You could get back. Good old karma. Pay back. Vengeance. You do not need a YouTube tutorial to know how to do it. As soon as that sin hits you, the stone drops to the ground which means it is just reaching over to have a weapon in your hand to throw back. Now every one of you who grew up with a little brother or an older sister knows exactly how this works, right? Mom asks, why did you punch your sister? And you said because they punched me first. That is what you do right? We got to settle the score. Justice has to be carried out so if someone raises their voice with you, I can raise my voice too.

Oh, you want to point out all the things I am not doing well in this marriage? Well, I just happen to have a list in my back pocket now that you bring it up. You are going to betray my secrets at school? Well, I remember that conversation where you told me some of yours. You are going to blast your horn at me? Yell through the windshield? That is easy I can imitate that. You are going to give me the cold shoulder, I can turn this into ice. Alright, it is instinctual, you do not even have to think about it. When someone treats you in a wrong way, the sinful part of our heart just wants to reach down grab that stone and throw it right back. But God would say to you today, do not. Not just because it is not right but because it will not work. Just ask Samson.

You know that story from the Old Testament in the book of Judges of Samson and the Philistines? Samson was this womanizer from the Jewish people who got in a stone throwing fest with the neighboring Philistines. Kind of started at Samson's wedding. He married this woman. He had a riddle for all of his wedding guests. They could not answer it, so they threatened his wife. If you do not figure out the answer to the riddle, we will kill you. So, she told the answer. Which made Samson mad. He picked up that stone and he killed 30 Philistines. So, the Philistines picked up that stone and they killed Samson's wife and her father. So, Samson picked up a stone called the jawbone of a donkey and he scattered the blood of a 1,000 Philistines on the rocks. So, the Philistines bribed Samson's new lady friend, Delilah. They figured out the secret of his great strength. And when they cut off his hair, the Philistines grabbed him and gouged out his eyes. And blind Samson, he somehow found that stone. He pushed down the pillars of their temple. They died, he died, everyone died. But you know what never happened in the whole story? At no point in the entire story did Samson or the Philistines say okay, now we are good.

Let me show you a few passages. Peter said really clearly, "Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult." Paul agreed with him in Romans 12, he said do not repay anyone, even a person who threw the biggest stone, anyone. "Do not repay them evil for evil." And Jesus in that famous line, "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." So you do not have to forget, but don't try to get them back.

And the third path that God would not like you to take is this, do not get bitter. Getting back at someone and getting bitter are very, very closely related but they are not exactly the same. If someone throws this stone at me in a hurry, it is going to drop there at my feet. Payback is when I grab it and I throw it. Bitterness it when I grab it and I hold on to it. You know it just would not feel right, maybe I know it is going to be drama if I really give you what you deserve, but it is just something I cannot let go of. You know that you are bitter when your hands are not open to pray for someone who hurt you. When your hands are not free to extend in reconciliation. To forgive with a hand shake. To raise open hands in a blessing. When just the thought of that person does not bring anything good but just this deep bitterness it is because you are holding on to something and you will not let it go.

Another clue this has happened to you is when you hope that their life is hard even if you do not cause it. You know she files for divorce and now on Facebook you see that she is dating again and what do you want to happen to that relationship? Someone is talking trash on the court or on the field. What do you want to happen to them by the end of the year? Someone hurts you at

school, you are not going to throw the stone back but you hope they get a little bit of what they gave to you. You hope that they hurt in the way that you hurt. You just want to be right if God would bless a person like that.

But friends I want to warn you. Holding on to sin for another day will just make it harder to let go tomorrow. Twenty five years ago, I got my first job. My dad had a real estate company. He built this big condo complex in Green Bay. Eighteen-hole golf course around it. And my job was to cut the grass. There is a lot of grass, alright. Day after day after day after day. Then it would keep growing after I cut it. So, day after day after day after day, then I would have to do the weed whacking or the string trimming and it was not like that ten-minute zip around your yard. It would be a 12-hour job. So, I put on my little safety glasses. I fill up that little tank. I would wrap around enough string. And you know what I would do for eight hours a day, grab the handle... [buzzing] Lunch-time. [buzzing] And at the end of the day, you know what would happen? From grabbing on to that handle it was hard to let it go. Maybe that is why in the book of Hebrews 12 we find these words, God said, "See to it that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many." A bitter root. And every day that root gets stronger and it produces toxic fruit that will ruin your relationships and ruin your life.

So our heavenly Father in love says you do not have to forget it but I do not want you to touch that stone. Don't grab it to pay them back. Don't grab it just to hold on to it. Stew about it. Tell the story again to anyone who will listen. No, there is another path you can follow. And it is the path you might guess is called forgiveness. Now forgive is a complicated word that is often misunderstood so let me just give you my simplest definition. To me the word forgive simply means this - the daily choice to let the stone alone. And I carefully crafted every word in that sentence. I called forgiveness a daily choice. It's not a feeling. It's not something you know that one day the light switch goes and you suddenly feel great about it. No, it is a choice that you make, not once but every single day.

People often get this wrong. They say, but Pastor, I am not sure if I have forgiven him. Have forgiven? No, it's not a one-time thing. The question is not have you forgiven him? The question is are you forgiving him today? You know every day after that stone hits, there it sits. And tomorrow the stone is going to be there. And even if I throw it, just the way the heart works, the stone is still going to be there. And so forgiveness is this spiritual battle that we fight with the help of God to just let it alone. I know what happened, maybe I cannot forget about it but it is not my job. It is God's job to take care of the justice. It is the authority's job to take care of the consequences.

Today I am making a choice for the glory of God and for the good of my soul to let the stone alone. Which is exactly what Peter and Paul and Jesus teach us to do. Check out their words. Peter said, "Do not repay anyone evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called that you may inherit a blessing." Paul said, "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse." Jesus in His sermon about turning the other cheek, said, "I tell you love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

I have to tell you the rest of what Pastor Jim told me to tell you. The email he sent to me had a big paragraph. Mike doesn't forget the kind of trauma that people have been through. The hurts that they carry with them. But that was only this much of an email that was this long. You know what this part was about? It was about Jesus. And Jim reminded me that forgiveness for us is one of the hardest things we have to do. Giving money to the poor, okay. Forgiving dad or your ex or your boss or the system or whoever, that is hard. And so Jim pleaded with me. He begged me. He said, "Mike, give them the gospel. And then give them more of the gospel. And give them a whole bunch more of the gospel." So are you ready to get the gospel?

Check out Peter's words. It says when Jesus suffered, he made no threats. Jesus never said, "You wait until I get off of this cross. I am God and you are going to," -- No. "Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. 'He himself bore our sins' in His body on the cross." Paul agreed. Quoting King David from the Old Testament he said, "Blessed," happy, "are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one who sin the Lord will never count against them." How good is that? How blessed are we when every transgression is forgiven? He lets it alone. And not just that, when your sin is covered up there is not this pile of stones for God to stare at, it is covered up by the blood of Jesus.

If that was not good enough, he says blessed is the one who sin the Lord will never, never, never, ever, ever, ever count against you. There will not be a day when you have a conversation with God when he counts it against you. It is gone. As far as the east is from the west. And if the Devil is whispering in your ear right now, no, not that thing. You tell him to go to hell. Because the king of heaven has said, he has sworn by his own blood that he will never count it against you. The night before he died on the cross, Jesus spoke these words, "This is my blood of a covenant. which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." So friends, "be kind and compassionate to one another. Forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you."

Some of you heard the tragic story from back in 2018 when a 26-year-old accountant named Botham Jean was sitting in his own apartment watching football and eating ice cream. But then his door opened and in walked a cop named Amber Guyger. Somehow Amber had thought that the apartment was her own. And when she saw this 26-year-old sitting on her couch she reached for her gun. She was a police officer. But he had not broken into her apartment, she was breaking into his. Thinking she was in danger, she drew the gun, pointed, fired, and murdered an innocent man.

In the process she threw a boulder at every heart of Botham's family and friends. Just over a year later Amber received a ten-year prison sentence for the crime. But what caught the nation's attention was not just the sentence, it was Botham's brother Brandt. You need to watch this video after church today. He stood on the witness stand and here is what he said. He said I hope you go to God with all of your guilt. I forgive you. And I know if you go to God and ask him, he will forgive you. I love you just like anyone else. I personally want the best for you. I love you as a person. And he begged this ashamed woman to reach out to Jesus. And then Brandt did the supernatural. He turned to the judge of the case and he asked can I give her a hug please? And when the judge said yes, he leapt out of the witness stand, he meets Amber right in the middle of the courtroom and she collapses in his arms.

And for a minute, a full minute, they embrace. And when you watch that video and the beauty of forgiveness wells your eyes up in tears, I want you to notice something, Brandt's hands wrapped around her, wide open. Because on that day Brandt chose to let the stone alone. I pray that you can too, just like Jesus does every single day for you. Let us pray.

Dear Father, how blessed are we. Our backs might hurt. Our jobs might be complicated. We might be broke, lonely, sad. But you are the God who will never count our sins against us. Every time we cross the line and we knew better, never will you count it against us. Every time in ignorance we broke one of your rules, never will you count it against us. For every one of us who trust in Jesus, it is gone. And our forgiveness is complete.

How can that be God? We do not know but you promised it and you are incapable of lying. So we pray since you love us that much. We pray for your help. You say that the fruit of the spirit is love and it is peace and it is patience and it is kindness and it is gentleness. And we want that so desperately so please send your Holy Spirit.

God at times in my life I find it hard to forgive and I have barely been sinned against. So for everyone here who is been deeply wounded. For everyone here who had an ex or mother or a father or relative or a best friend who hurt them deeply send your Holy Spirit so they can let it go today and tomorrow and for all the days to come. Give us the strength and the power that we need.

We might not feel capable, but God you are. And I pray for miracles today God. For people who are enemies I pray that this message will be one step towards reconciliation. I pray that you could replace bitterness with trust, with amenity, with affection. Shock us God with what you can do in our hearts, in other relationships when Jesus is the daily choice we make.

I thank you so much God that 128 times you brought up the subject. It can be difficult to hear but you bring it up for our good. So we ask for your help today. And we pray with boldness and with confidence because we know that you have not turned your face away. You are looking right at us. The children that you have forgiven every single sin.

We pray this with courage and with joy. And we ask it all in Jesus' name. And all God's people who agreed they said, amen.