

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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Pray Like This...

PART

3

TITLE

Pray For Forgiveness

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 6:12, 14-15; Psalm 51:1-12



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Well, it is great to see you, Providence family. Thank you for being here. I know it's cold, and it's wet. There's a lot of people at home. For those of you at home, welcome. We're so glad that you have joined us as well. Also, for all of our guests, welcome. I pray that this time is truly encouraging to you. I'm very, very excited about the impact of a sermon like this because so many people in the room, they carry guilt. Before we get there, I just want to commend you. Your response last week to what you heard in God's word was really encouraging, certainly to me, but to us as a team. Over 300 from our church family said, "I think I would like to learn more about these trips," and so there's 20 trips this year going all over the world to take the gospel to people who have never heard it. I'm just so grateful that so many people said, "I'm willing to go."

I'm so thankful also that for many of you, you said, "You know what? I'm not in a life group. I'm not in a small group that can know me and who can love me and who can pray for me and, me, those things to them. I'm going to venture out." I'm so grateful for your courage to do that. I pray that our team, that we can help you in that process. Then, 2000 Bible reading journals were picked up, which is really incredible. My prayer now as I'm seeing just your faithfulness to respond to what you heard in God's word is that he would give us the courage to put feet on all of those intentions so we can finish on each of those things. In that journal, the very first page of every month, there's one or two verses for us as a church family to memorize as a family of faith. The first four months, what they really do is it's a verse that's just tied to the idea of how do we plant our lives within the church. Then, the second set of four verses is how do we plant the gospel in our city. Then, the third set of four verses is how do we plant churches in the world.

When we memorize scripture, there's a lot of us who think, "I'm old, and so I can't memorize anymore," but we memorize what we care about. We all know that. We can all remember things that we know and that we love. God's word, what it does is it provides a hook on the wall so that when you go through life and you have to make a decision, you have something to hang things on. God's word is that for us. What I want us to do, for January, it's Hebrews chapter 10 verses 24 and 25. You can write these down on a little card. If you read this once a day for the rest of the month, there's a really good chance you're going to have this. Let's practice right now. "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near." What we love to do as a church family, when we draw together, as it says, is to encourage one another by praying and by opening up God's word. That's what we're going to do now. If you would, would you bow with me?

Father in heaven, we thank you for your kindness in our life that leads us to repentance. We thank you for what we're going to see here this morning in your word, what you give to us, Jesus, when you're on the earth. You invite us to pray, to confess our sin to you. Your word tells us that you forgive us, that you take the debt that is insurmountable and you overcome it because of your grace. We're amazed, and we're thankful. I pray for those in the room right now who simply do not think that your grace can overcome the size of their guilt and their sin. I thank you, God, that your word says that where our sin abounds, your grace abounds all the more. Would you help us to see that our sin can not outpace your grace? Would you give people hope?

Would you give all of us hope as we leave this room knowing that our sins are forgiven and that we don't have to carry them any longer? We thank you for your kindness to our life. Would you speak through weakness now to all of us? We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, I invite you to Matthew chapter six. Matthew six, there's just a few verses we're going to read. We're going to really focus on just one of them. In chapter six, what we find is the Lord's Prayer, where Jesus is teaching people how to pray to God. One of those is the area of confession. Why this is so important is because every single one of us, this is true of us. It says that the Bible says of us is that God has sown his law within our heart so deep that when we sin against God and against that law that we cut our heart. It injures us. We feel it. The Bible calls that cut guilt, and all of us know what that feels like when we do something. In fact, if you just think right now the worst thing that you regret in life. Maybe, for some of you, you don't have to think very long. Perhaps you did something even this calendar year. Yeah, we've only been going here for about 10 days or so. You think, "Man, I can not believe that I did that." Guilt just rises so high within your heart right now. This is why. God Almighty, he has etched, he has literally sown his law of beauty, of righteousness, of holiness, of goodness within our heart.

When we sin against that law, we actually cut our heart. That guilt is something that all of us face. It's interesting. We're sort of a four trick pony when it comes to guilt. We all do the same thing in order to overcome it. Sadly, each one of these is a dead end. Let's walk through each one of them. The first thing that we all try to do is we try to outrun it. We trying running from our guilt. Every single one of us do this. Proverbs 28 verse one says, "The wicked flee when no one pursues." What that means is this. There's something inherent to guilt. When we experience it, we run from life even though no one else may be chasing us or maybe even know what we've done. We feel like we're being chased. Every question, we wonder the source of that question. Do they know what I did? We run from people. We run from relationships. We run from responsibilities. We run from situations that remind us of those situations of what we did. We try to run from it. Here's the problem. This is why it's a dead end. You can not outrun what you carry. Guilt resides within the heart so wherever you take your heart, you're taking your guilt there also. Outrunning your guilt is simply never going to work.

The second thing we all try to do is we try to numb our guilt. We try numbing it. We try numbing it with food and with drink and with drug and with medication, with shopping, with working, with sports. What we try to do is fill up what we think is a hole with something else to distract our attention, to numb our heart to the realities, but here's the problem with this. You can not deal with one storm by creating another one. This is the folly of humanity. Right? We create storms and then complain that it's raining. If you try to fill up your guilt by eating too much, then you're going to have guilt that you ate too much. Now, you have two storms instead of one.

The third thing we all try to do with our guilt is we try cleansing our guilt. We do this through good works. We think, "If I can just do a little bit more, if I can be a little bit more kind or I can not do that again," and we start thinking about how do we add enough clean water to our heart to cleanse it, but here's the problem. It's very similar to the ocean. We can not remove the salt in the ocean by adding eight-ounce glasses of fresh-water. There is a saltiness in the ocean and there's a guilt within the heart that no amount of our own human righteousness, our own goodness, our own effort can remove. This is why cleansing or trying to cleanse yourself from guilt is a dead end.

The other thing that we try to do, the last trick that we have, is we try to redefine our guilt. We try redefining our guilt. What I mean by that is we declare that we don't have any. We declare we have no regrets, but if you ever thought about the fact that the only people that say, "I have no regrets," that's a counterbalance to the fact that they feel regret within their own heart. We get tattoos, no regrets. That's someone that has regrets. I'm just telling you right now they have regrets. We try to redefine God's law. We say, "You know what? That's not the truth. This is the truth." We try to create a new reality, redefine reality, but here's the thing. We can not erase the law that is sown upon our heart by writing a new one. It's there. It's in all of us. We all have moments in our life that we want to erase.

Here's the good news. God has made a way, but there's only one. It is one way, and it's called forgiveness. There's only one way to access that forgiveness, and he calls it confession of sin. It's because of what Jesus has done for us that he gives us the ability to confess our sin to God and receive his forgiveness after we have established a relationship with him through his Son Jesus Christ. You see, when you get sick, you go to the doctor. When you leave the doctor, you leave with a piece of paper. It looks like this. It's a prescription. Now, that piece of paper is not medicine, but it gives you hope. You know why? Because it connects you to medicine. It's the access point. That's what prayer is.

You see, Jesus told us to confess our sin in prayer to God because prayer connects us to a God who has the power to forgive, the power to heal. This is what he says to us. He says in Matthew six verse nine, "Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and," here it is, "and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." When we talk about prayer, what Jesus does first is he places it on the foundation of a relationship. We're talking to someone that he says is our Father in heaven. Our Father indicates he has full compassion, overwhelming compassion for our life. The fact that he resides in heaven, his throne is in heaven, what that means is that he has the capability to do what we need. He's full of compassion, full of capacity. He's capable to do.

The very next thing that he does, he says now let's address your heart. See, the Lord's Prayer is not a this is a sequence and you have to go in this order. No, what he's doing here is he's giving us phrases that cause us, once we say them, we have to think about our own life. He begins with adoration. That's what we looked at last week. This is really, really important. Adoration, he begins, "Hallowed be your name." The word hallow means that when we hallow something, what we're doing is we're treating it as something that is our central concern. It's our chief aim. It's our recurring daydream. It's what we think about. It's what we want more than anything else. Why that's so important is this. If we do adoration right, confession and petition become a reflex. You see, adoration is how we view God, confession is how we view ourself, and petition is how we view our world.

If you see God as big and bright and consequential, if you see Jesus and his name and everything that he is for you, if you see that in Jesus, you have a faithful one, you have a true one, you have the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, the way, the truth, the life, your high priest, you have an everlasting Father and a mighty God, a wonderful counselor, a Prince of Peace. If you know all those things are true of you and that all those things are directed for your good, then what that's like is it's like standing at the base of Mount Everest. No matter what you're doing at the base of Mount Everest, you can always see it in view. God wants to be in view in all of your relationships, all of your responsibilities, all of your decisions. He wants to be the big, bright reality. Here's the deal. When he is, confession is simply a reflex. This is why. Next week, we'll look at how we ask God for things, but for this week, when adoration is right within our life, meaning we're adoring the right thing, confession becomes the reflex because when you're seeing God, you're seeing a holy one. When the holy one is the mirror, and we look back upon ourself, we think, "Wait a minute. I'm not holy," it creates a pattern of daily confession when we fall short of his glory.

What does he do here? He shows us three things that Jesus desires for each and every one of us. The first is this. Jesus desires that we see our need for forgiveness. You have a need to be forgiven. You may not know it. Actually, you do. You may try to redefine it, but every single one of us knows that there is something missing in our life, and there is a residual guilt that's left in its place. Jesus says that we have debts. That's why he says we should pray, "Forgive us our debts." Our debts is something you should personalize. My debt, that's me. He's talking to me there, my debt. Brian's debt. You see, Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." When you see the glory of God, and you hallow that, you adore that, what happens is we recognize that we've fallen short of that.

Now, that may be one of the greatest understatements in the whole Bible. We have fallen short of the glory of God. Is that necessary? I mean, is that really necessary to be there? Well, let me ask you: Is this sign necessary on earth? Does someone really need this? This trail is unsafe. If you can't see the trail, it's unsafe. It's flooded with three feet of water, don't walk on it. Here's the deal. Someone on this earth needs this sign, which is why we make it. It's why the DOT put it up and said, "You know what? We need to make signs like this. We need to cast it into metal so that it won't go away because people need to learn this truth." God says, "Look, you may not think that this is a big deal for you, that this is an obvious truth. Let me tell you something.

You have fallen short of the glory of God.” Ezra chapter nine verse six, he looks to God, and he says, “Our iniquities have risen higher than our heads and our guilt has mounted up to the heavens.”

You see, if you get to the place or you meet someone who says, “I don’t have any guilt,” what they’ve made God is an idea and not a person. This is one thing you need to understand about God. Were all of us to go away, he would still be who he is. Were all of us to not believe in him, he would not change a single iota. He is who he is because he is a person. He relates to people. He has emotions. He has thoughts. He has desires. He has actions. He has a mission. There is someone there to offend. When we come to the place where we say, “I can’t offend God,” what we’re thinking is that he’s an idea. He’s a system of thought. He’s the collection, he’s the summation of our belief about him, but he’s not. He is who he is. He’s revealed who he is and part of who he reveals is he says, “I am perfect in every way, and I’ve written my law upon your heart, and you’ve all sinned against me.” When you look at the Bible, when you want to see the most vulnerable revelations within the scripture of God that, frankly, are the ones that make me tremble the most, not in fear, but in sorrow, it’s when he laments our sin.

I think of a verse like Jeremiah chapter two verse five. I don’t have it on the screen. This is what he says. God looks at his people, and he says, look at me, “What fault do you have in me? What part of me is unbecoming, is unattractive, is inconsequential, is boring that you would walk away from me?” It’s absolutely stunning how vulnerable he presents himself when he considers the fact that his people, that the crowning achievement of his creation were created to have a relationship with him, we said, “Nah.” It’s stunningly painful to him within scripture when he comes to us, and he says, “You’ve not honored my holiness, you’ve not admired my greatness, and you’ve not obeyed my words, and you’ve not heeded or even expressed appreciation in my protective restrictions over you. You’ve not loved my people that are created in my image. You’ve not treasured my grace. You’ve not trusted my faithfulness. You’ve not believed my promises or respected my justice, pursued my pleasure.” You see, though our debt before him is miles deeper than our ability to see that debt, our debt is real, and it impairs every part of our life.

Have you ever noticed at a funeral, we just feel obligated to state the obvious? We always start, “He was kind. She was this, this,” and all the lovely thing, and yet we don’t feel that we’ve told the whole story until we tell the whole story, which is why there’s an obligation to say, “You know what? They battled with this, or they struggled with this, or he talked to much. He just wouldn’t let it go,” but we normally say it with a smile on our face, like, “Very impulsive.” When that person was alive was being impulsive, we weren’t smiling so much, though. Were we? You see, one day we’re going to find that every single part of our life, our motives, our intentions, our relationships, our personality, everything has been marred and distorted by sin. There is a part of every one of us that will be unrecognizable in heaven because we will never treat people, we will never see ourselves, we won’t have motives that we have here. We’ll be so different in heaven. Every single part of us will be redeemed in heaven for those who have trusted Jesus Christ.

This is what he says. He goes, “This all has to begin with this. Do you see that I am holy God and you’ve fallen short of my glory? You now have a spiritual debt that’s absolutely real, and it’s absolutely significant. It absolutely breaks my heart, and it changes your whole life.” Friends, he’s not an idea. The second thing that Jesus wants us to see that he desires is that we confess our sin and be forgiven. This is where everything turns into really good news. He could have just said, “Yeah, you have debts. Let’s move on.” That’s not what he said. He gives this. He shows us that confession is possible and that forgiveness is available when he says, “Pray like this,” and then he says, “Forgive us of our debts.” Jesus wouldn’t say this if forgiveness wasn’t available. You know, forgiveness means a really special thing. Most of us, we use the word forgiveness. We don’t really know exactly what it means. What it exactly means is sent away. It can also mean release. That’s what it means to forgive someone, to send something away or to release. Sometimes, a picture is more than a thousand words. That’s what the Old Testament does. It serves us. It gives us all kinds of pictures that points to a reality that is coming in Jesus Christ.

In the Old Testament, there was a day that God assigned for his people. It was called the Day of Atonement, when the people, when the nation would get right with God. They would all gather at the temple. They would all come to one central place, one central day. There, the high priest would take two goats, unblemished goats. The first goat, he’d place his hands on his head in order to put the sins of the people symbolically upon the goat and kill the goat and place the goat up on the altar where it would burn as a sacrifice for sin. Then, he would come, and he would take a second goat. He would place his hands symbolically on the head in order to symbolize that the sins of the people not only have they been died for by this animal, but he placed it on this animal. Then, the second goat, what they would do with this goat is they would take it so far out into the wilderness that it couldn’t find its way back. It would be sent away, released.

This is what forgiveness is to you and to me. You may say, “Wait a minute. We don’t do goats around here.” It’s true. We don’t do goats. You didn’t bring a goat today, and I’m glad you didn’t. We wouldn’t have a pen for him around here. Why should we care about the goats in the Old Testament? This is why. Because these animals, like this picture, were a temporary fix, sort of like putting a tarp on a leaky roof. They covered the house until Christ came to fix the roof. It was a temporary fix, but then Jesus came, and he lived a perfect life, no sin whatsoever. He never fell short of the glory of God ever. Yet, he took our sin upon himself, not symbolically, in reality, and he went to a cross. There, he died just like the first goat. Not only did he do that, but he took our sins so far away from us that it could never find its way back to us. This is what Psalm 103 verse 12 says, “As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.”

How is this forgiveness applied to us? How do we receive it? If all this is true, if Jesus actually did this, and this is available, then how do you get some? How do you come in contact with that grace so that you can stop running and numbing and cleansing and redefining? You can actually experience freedom from your guilt. How? Confession. Forgive us our debts, God. 1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Now, forgiveness, it’s sort of a process, and I want to show you the process through a man named David.

David was a king in the Old Testament. He was a great king. It says of him that he was a king after God's own heart. What that means is this. David hallowed God. For many of the days of his life and hours of his life, he was David's central concern. He was his recurring daydream. He was his aim in life. To please God was everything to him.

Then, one day, he, from his castle, he looked down and he saw a woman bathing and got distracted. That's typically what happens when a man sees a naked woman, is he gets distracted. He's not sinned, but he's distracted. Suddenly, he allowed his heart, though, to change what he adored. Suddenly, that woman became his adoration, what was hallowed, what was his central concern, what was his recurring daydream. This is the very first step towards sin, and then recovery is distorted adoration. When we take God and all of his glory and we say, "You're not what I adore right now. What I adore right now is this," whether it's money, whether it's sex, whether it's lust, whatever it is, whatever it is that leads us, we say, "I need that," and that becomes our central concern, our chief ambition, "That's what I need. I think about that. I want that," it always begins with distorted adoration.

Well, her husband happens to be one of his own bodyguards, a noble man who was out with his army fighting his battles. David took his adoration, called her up, commits adultery, gets her pregnant, tries a coverup. It fails, and so he murders Uriah, her husband. This is what we call sin. That's the second step. It begins with a distorted adoration, and when we act on it, listen, you don't have to act on it. You can repent of a distorted adoration and say, "I do not want to act on that," but when we do act on it, what happens is the Bible calls that sin, when we step across, when we miss the mark, sin. What's amazing is the Bible tells us that David would not confess his sin. The Bible actually does something that is pretty unique. That is it hits the fast forward button from that sin to nine months later when Nathan came to confront him of his sin.

Now, this is amazing. This is the only nine month gap in the life of David that we have in the whole Bible. We don't see him worshiping. We don't see him singing. We don't see him writing any songs during this time. We see him irritable. We see him angry. You know why? Because the third thing is conviction. This is where you see it, Psalm 32 verse three and four. David wouldn't confess his sin, so the Bible says that God tore up his heart. Psalm 32 says this, "When I kept silent," when I wouldn't confess my sin, "my bones wasted away, for day and night your hand was heavy upon me." This is conviction. It's conviction. What does that mean? It means when I go to bed, I think about my guilt, and I can't sleep, but I'm not going to confess because it'd be too embarrassing or I think it's right. I don't know.

I'm trying to redefine it. I'm trying to numb myself. Now, he's tired, and he's irritable. He's ticked off for nine months. His relationships are fragmented. Things are just flustered. His whole life is messed up. We see nothing of nine months. God just said, "You know what? That's not worth recording. Fast forward." Some of us, that's where we're at right now. You have something so big and so relevant in terms of guilt in your life that you say, "I am not going to confess it."

I'm holding on to it. I'm redefining reality. This is right, and I won't confess it as sin." What God does, because he loves us, is his hand becomes very heavy upon us. Augustine said, "God's greatest anger is when he no longer gets angry." We should thank the Lord that his hand is heavy when we won't confess.

Finally, he does. This is the four, his confession. We see his confession in Psalm 51. In Psalm 51, this is what David says. He comes to God, and he says, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love. According to your abundant mercy would you blot out my transgression?" Transgression is to cross over. God draws the line, and we say, "I don't care about your line. I'm crossing over." It's willful rebellion. He says, "God, I did that." He says, "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity." That word means crookedness, means I start the day going well, and suddenly I'm like this. By 3:00, I'm all the way over here somewhere. God, would you wash me, would you cleanse me of that iniquity in my own heart? Then, he goes on. He says, "And cleanse me from my sin." Sin is to miss the mark. He says, "Against you and you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words."

You see what he's saying? He says, "I have a change of heart, mind, and will." He says, "God, I grieve what I did, but even more so, I grieve that I wanted to. I knew what you said," that's what he says at the very end, "that you may be justified." When I'm confessing our sin, what we're saying is, "God, you were right. What I did was wrong. I thought it was right. I want it to be right, but it wasn't right. Your standard is not a standard. It's the standard." He says, "God, would you forgive me?" That's the fifth and last. It's forgiveness. He actually gives it. Psalm 32 verse five, David says it like this. He goes, "Than I acknowledge my sin to you, and you forgave the iniquity of my sin." Listen to me, those of you right now who just won't confess your sin. He will send it all away. You don't have to carry it another day. You just have to look to him and say, "God, would you forgive me? I was wrong." He will forgive you.

Jesus desires we see our need, and then confess our sin and be forgiven. Then, the third thing is he reminds us that our relationship with God is so interconnected with our relationships with each other that you can not disrupt the one without disrupting the other. That is that Jesus desires that we forgive as we have been forgiven. I want you to notice how Jesus doubles down. Verse 12, he says, "Forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors." He teaches one more sentence. He says, "Yeah, that's how to pray." Then, he says, "You know what? I got something on my mind, something I said earlier. Let me come back to that." He doubles down. He says, "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive yours."

Jesus is not saying here that we earn forgiveness by forgiving. He's saying that we know God's forgiveness if we forgive. I know that some of you have been hurt so deeply, maybe in ways that nobody else in the room has been hurt. You think this is simply an impossibility. Some of you, the idea of forgiving someone their trespass against you, it's really threatening to you primarily because you know that if you send that away, then you have nothing left to clutch that justifies your anger, that justifies your new personality, that justifies your new identity. If you let that go, "I have nothing left to stand on," is what many people believe. You know what?

You don't have to live your whole life as a bitter person. You don't have to. You could let all that go, and you can forgive. What you'll find is that you'll be the happier one. You will be the happier one.

See, I realize some of you have been hurt in such terrible, terrible ways, but what Jesus is saying here is that no one has ever been wronged as we have wronged God. What he does in Matthew 18 is he tells us a little parable about this in order to show us. It starts with Peter. A lot of things started with Peter. Peter comes up, and he says, "Hey, Jesus. How often do I have to forgive somebody that does the same thing to me?" Jewish law says you got to do it three times. Three strikes, you're out. He goes, "I tell you what. Is it like seven times?" Peter, he probably thought he was really spiritual, "I'm going to double the law, add one for good measure. Aren't you pleased with me, Lord?" The Lord comes back, and he goes, "No, not seven times, but 70 times seven or 77 times." Now, why did he say this? It wasn't so that when we get, "Okay, listen, man. I've forgiven him 401 times, you're getting close. It's starting to stack up. Just want you to know that you're in the yellow light right now." No, that's not what he's saying.

Jesus is actually referring to something that took place all the way back in Genesis chapter four. You remember that Adam and Eve had some kids. The first son, Cain, killed his brother, Abel. Later on, Cain has a kid, and his name is Lamech. Lamech kills a man. Lamech basically says, "Listen, if anyone comes at me, I'm coming at you." This is what he says, "If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is 77-fold," same construction, same language as what Jesus used. Now, what's happening here? Jesus is saying, "Look, I know that revenge is the atmosphere that you breathe as sinful people, but now that I have come, let grace be the atmosphere. Instead of making revenge your natural go-to, because of my grace in your life, now my grace extended through your life can become the atmosphere of your life."

Then, he tells a parable. He says the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him 10,000 talents. Now, let me just translate that. That's 200,000 years of wages. A talent was 20 years' wage. Since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold with his wife and children and all that he had and payment to be made. The servant fell on his knees, imploring, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything." By the way, this is not a true story. It's a parable to tell us something about us. We have a debt that would require more than 200,000 years, and yet we come to him and say, "Just give me a little bit of time, and I'll pay it all off." That's what good works are like to God. You're not going to live long enough, plus you're going to keep sinning.

He goes on. This is amazing. He says, then out of pity for him, the master of the servant released him and forgave him all his debt. When that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him 100 days' wage, and he seized him, choked him, said, "Pay what you owe." This fellow servant fell down and pleaded. He said the same thing, "Have patience with me, and I will repay you." He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place.

Then, his master summoned him and said to him, “You wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you have not had mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you?” In anger, his master delivered him over to the jailers until he should pay all his debt. End of parable. Now, he looks up at the crowd, and he says, “This is your takeaway. This is for you. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

What do we do with everything you just heard? Let me boil it down to just a few things. The first thing is you have to have a relationship with Jesus Christ. Let me encourage you to trust Christ and be saved. You know, the very last thing or at least one of the last requests that David had of God in Psalm 51 when he’s pleading and confessing his sin, he goes, “God, would you please not cast me away from your presence? Just don’t send me away because then life would not be worth living.” You know, the good news is that God didn’t. You know why he didn’t? Because the very thing David asked him not to do, God did to his Son Jesus Christ. Jesus took all of our sin upon his shoulders and was cast out of the Father’s presence on the cross, but then he rose from the dead. He says, “If you’ll place your faith and belief and trust in me, I will not only forgive you of your sin, I will deposit my righteousness into your account.”

When you trust Christ, you do not have a zero balance where your sin has simply been removed. You have a \$1 billion surplus because Jesus Christ’s righteousness has been deposited into your account. Don’t turn over a new leaf. Do not reform. Do not run. Don’t numb. Believe in Christ today for the forgiveness of your sin. Second is this. It’s let’s trust Christ and forgive one another. How in the world could we possibly be unwilling to forgive \$100 debt when we’ve been forgiven a \$1 billion debt? This is the basis of Colossians 3:13 when he says, “As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.” You know just as well as I do that forgiveness is not natural. Revenge, nursing wounds, and bitterness is natural. Forgiveness is a miracle, but it’s a miracle that takes place, and we see how God’s wrath was overcome towards us because then we can then transfer that. You see how our wrath can be overcome towards others.

One thing I’ve come to learn is though God’s forgiveness is perfect, ours is not, so it requires a process. The deeper the wound, the more the wound sits underneath the surface, sort of like an iceberg. You may be faithful and say, “You know what? I’m going to forgive that person, God. I forgive them of what they’ve done.” It’s like cutting off the top of the iceberg. You think, “Okay. It’s gone.” A month later, you’re traveling down the road. You think about the offense. All of a sudden, you’re angry again, “Wait a minute. I thought that I forgave that person.” What happened is more of the iceberg just kind of came up to the top. Every time it comes up, you forgive again, and you forgive again, and you forgive again. Soon, you will be free.

I want you to know that forgiveness may not end in the restoration and trust of that relationship, in particular if there’s no repentance. God has never called us to trust a man. He’s called us to forgive a man, but by his grace, we can forgive. The last thing is this. Let’s trust Christ and confess our sins daily. Do you know why we need to confess daily? It’s because we sin daily. Confession is like washing our face just hours after taking a shower. Sin separates and confession renews.

Before we do anything else, what I want to encourage you to do is to take just a moment, ask God to search your heart, and confess any sin that he reveals to him this morning. Let's do that.

Father in heaven, we thank you for your grace to reveal and unveil sin that's deep within our heart. God, would you help us to see and adore you? I pray that you would help us to adore you in such a way that it would bring confession into his proper focus in our own life. I pray that he would forgive us of our sin. I pray that he would forgive me of my sin. I pray for those in this room who have never trusted Christ in their life, that you would lead them right now, Lord, to believe in you, to confess you as Lord. Would you forgive them of their sin? Would you save them this morning right now? We thank you for your kindness. We believe that when sinners such as us are pardoned that we become happy singers, people who love to sing of your grace and your kindness. Now as we sing to you, I pray, Father, that you would be gracious to us. Help us to celebrate now what's been written, that we've been forgiven. We love you, and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.



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