

# "Really, forgiven?"

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[ 0 : 00 ] Preaching is something that I don't get to do because I am good enough or because I am so righteous that I have earned a place up here. It is something that God in his wisdom chooses to use a sinner like you and like me to do. I've got a list of people here for you. A bunch of different categories. We've got murderers who destroy lives. We've got tyrants who crush nations. Abusers who beat the vulnerable. Bullies who joy in others suffering. Racists who dehumanize the image bearers of God. Thieves who steal livelihoods. Adulterers who do who destroy families in the name of love. Liars who destroy the truth. Gossips who spread strife and misery. Backstabbers who betray trust. Child predators who who harm the innocent. Drug dealers who sell substances that kill and destroy. And the list could go on and on. The question is what do all of these people have in common? And there's many different things that we could could say that this group of people have in common. But what I want to focus on is the fact that there are people in each of these categories who would claim to be Christians. People who live these sort of ways and yet are comfortable to say that they know Christ and that they are a Christian.

And I bet if you're anything like me that you have met people out there who claim to be Christians and yet continue on in some of these practices without any remorse and without any guilt. Likely there are some of you in here perhaps many of you have been hurt seriously by people who called themselves Christians and yet refuse to live like it.

So what do we do with people like this? If they walk in here and they say I'd like to be a member, do we have to let them in just because they claim to be a Christian?

Do we have to hug them and sing with them and have them be a part of our group simply because they claim the name of Christ?

What do we do with them? I want to be clear that I'm not talking about your regular everyday Christians or or non-Christians who walk in with broken and messy lives.

[ 2 : 49 ] All of us sin. All of us fall short. And this is a place for sick people. But this is not a place for people who are sick and refuse to realize their sickness.

And it's certainly not a place for people who claim the name of Christ but refuse to live like he commanded. What would we do with a person who comes in here and they claim to be a Christian yet they abuse their wife?

Is there any recourse? Do we just have to fellowship with them like they're another believer? Do we just shrug and shake our heads having nothing to say or do in defense of the truths of Scripture?

I bring all of this up because in the passage we are going to be studying today in 2 Corinthians, Paul talks about the results of an act of church discipline.

So before we get into that passage, we need to spend some time thinking about church discipline and what it is and what the Bible says about it. And that's why we're here in Matthew 18 to start.

[ 4 : 09 ] In Matthew 18, Jesus lays out the pattern of church discipline, which teaches the believers how to handle those in their midst who are making a practice of sin, claiming the name of Christ and refusing to repent.

This is a tool that Jesus gave to the church to handle people who claim to be Christians but refuse to live like it. Please follow along with me in Matthew 18, starting in verse 15.

Moreover, if your brother sins against you, go and tell his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

But if he will not hear you, take one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church.

But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you

loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

[ 5 : 31 ] Again, I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in their midst.

There is a lot more we could talk about when it comes to church discipline. But this is the foundational passage for understanding the process.

When there is an obvious sin in a Christian's life, the church needs to respond to it. We do that by having someone kindly and lovingly approach the person and point out that pattern of sin in their life.

And from the Bible, show them how what they're doing is wrong. It might go something like this. John, I heard that you were sleeping with your girlfriend.

And I'm worried for your soul because of that. The Bible teaches that such things should only happen in marriage. And you need to stop and confess your sin to God.

[ 6 : 42 ] And you should probably break up with her. And for these things are not a good sign that your relationship is God glorifying. Ideally, if the brother is a believer, he will be convicted by the scripture and by looking at his sin, and he will repent and change his lifestyle to fit what the Bible is saying.

But as Jesus outlined, if the person refuses to listen, you should bring a few others, possibly the pastor or elders to approach the person about their sin.

You could say something then like this. John, this is just a fictional character. John, we love you. And you claim to love Christ.

You need to stop doing this. Jesus warns that if we love him, we will listen to him. And if we don't love him, we won't listen to him.

If you keep on with this practice and refuse to change, you should not be confident that you will get to heaven, for you do not obey the Savior. But if you repent and trust in Christ, both Christ and we will gladly forgive you and welcome you back.

[ 8 : 08 ] But if that person, when confronted with even more people, refuses to obey scripture and still claims to be a Christian, the Jesus outlines that he must be confronted by the whole church, where the church might say through a representative, John, we here at Christ Baptist Church love you, but we cannot treat you like a Christian because you refuse to act like one.

We do not want to confuse the world and let them think that Christians can act like this and still represent Jesus. And we do not want to confuse you and make you think that you can live like this and still go to heaven.

Unless you repent, you will not be allowed to have the Lord's Supper together with us. You will not be counted as a member and we will not treat you like we treat believers.

And this is the process of church discipline that Jesus outlines, that the church needs to be able to say what obedience to Christ looks like and what it does not look like by protecting the table of the Lord's Supper and the membership and the right hand of fellowship.

The point of church discipline is to call people to repentance and obedience to scripture. So that when someone says to us, I hear what you're saying about the Bible, but I've seen Christians do all sorts of bad things.

[ 9 : 49 ] I can say to them, there are people who call themselves Christians who act like you say, but we would not let them be part of our church and we would not call them Christians and we would not approve of their behavior.

And we also want to be able to say on that final day when we see Jesus, Lord, I use the tools that you gave me to help my fellow believers stay the course all the way till the end so that no one would be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin and fall away into destruction.

And I use these tools because I love those people and I loved you. I love how 1 Corinthians chapter 6 captures the need for a changed life and also the forgiveness we have in Christ.

1 Corinthians 6 verses 9 through 11. Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived, neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

And such were some of you. Notice he says were. We're not here because we are righteous and perfect, but because we are sinners who have come to the Savior.

[ 11 : 27 ] And that always comes with a change. But you, and such were some of you, but you were washed. That is, your sins were taken away.

You were sanctified. That means you were taught how to live rightly. And you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Such were some of us. Such were even myself. And yet by the grace of God, I stand here living a life different than what I lived before.

And so the point of church discipline, it's a tool to show who is a Christian and who isn't, and to treat believers who are falling away from Christian life.

Hebrews exhorts us to watch over one another and to encourage one another all the more as the final days approach, that no one would fall away, but that everyone would make it to glory.

[ 12 : 31 ] Amen. So now we're almost ready to talk about the passage in 2 Corinthians. You can feel free to turn there with me.

2 Corinthians chapter 2. You'll find it on page 1776 in the Pew Bibles. As I mentioned last week, when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, he told the church to have nothing to do with a sexually immoral man.

A specific person in the congregation who was practicing some sinful behaviors and refused to repent. Paul exhorts the church to have nothing to do with him.

And after he sent that letter to them, they did discipline him. They kept him from the body.

And in response to this discipline, the man repented. He changed his lifestyle and he stopped living in the sexually immoral way.

[ 13 : 42 ] Paul receives the report of that. You know, this is what church discipline is meant to do to correct the life. It worked in this circumstance.

The brother who they put out has now come back living rightly. And so Paul in the passage we're reading today instructs the church to welcome him back with love and forgiveness.

And so now with that background, we're ready to read what Paul has written here in 2 Corinthians, starting in verse 5.

But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but to some extent all of you, not to be too severe. This punishment, that is the church discipline, which was inflicted by the majority, is sufficient for such a man.

So that on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him. Lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow.

[ 14 : 50 ] Therefore, I urge you, reaffirm your love to him. For to this end, I also wrote that I might put you to the test whether you are obedient in all things.

The church obeyed Paul and obeyed Christ. And God used that obedience, that right use of this tool that Christ has given of church discipline.

God used it to set this man's heart back on the right path, to help this man live rightly and be able to obey his Savior.

God's instructions are good and they are good for us. And this is a great example of how obedience to Christ brings blessing.

This brother who was once lost in sin is now found in obedience. Now that church discipline has worked, Paul has to emphasize to the Corinthians that they need to have a forgiving attitude, that they need to be ready to exercise all the things that go along with true forgiveness.

[ 16 : 17 ] And this is a great instruction and example for us. We should have a forgiving attitude whenever someone repents of their sins.

Whenever someone truly turns from the bad they were doing towards what is right, we should not hold the bad against them, but have a forgiving and a loving attitude.

We need this when church discipline happens and we need this when we deal with each other in our own sins, in our midst.

So as we look, and as we look at this forgiving attitude that Paul outlines here, we also need to follow that example all the way back to Christ to see what perfect forgiveness we receive in our Savior.

So Paul forgives even though the man's sin really does hurt. The Bible knows that sin really hurts people.

[ 17 : 33 ] That the things we're called to forgive are not light. They are not easy to forgive. And the forgiveness that the Bible talks about is not, oh, I was late.

Can you forgive me? But it is much deeper. You said something that crushed my heart. I needed you in this time and you weren't there.

And I forgive you. Paul forgives even though sin really hurts. Let's look at what he says in verse 4. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears.

And then he continues in verse 5. But if anyone has caused me grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent, not to be too severe.

So Paul knows that this man's sin has grieved himself greatly to the point of tears. But he says, by comparison, it has hurt the church even more than it hurt me.

[ 18 : 42 ] And so Paul's not unaware of how painful sin is. He knows that it really hurts. And yet he still calls them to forgive.

What that person did against you really did hurt. But you are still called to forgive them.

Then we take it one step forward and we look to our Savior and we realize that our sins really do hurt.

As we think about Christ on the cross, suffering and dying, realize that that's the penalty for your sins he's paying for.

Every bit of pain he's taking is the pain that your sins caused. Your sin really does hurt.

[ 19 : 42 ] It's not a light thing. And despite how heavy it is, how painful it is, Jesus still takes it to forgive us.

We should forgive like our God forgives. Like Richard said, his sins against God, our sins against God are huge.

And yet the sins we're called to forgive each other are so much smaller by comparison. If God still forgives us after all the grief we've caused him, no amount of grief that anyone causes us is justification to not forgive.

I love what Isaiah says in Isaiah 1.18. Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord.

Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as warm.

[ 20 : 49 ] This is what forgiveness does. Even though the depths of sin are hard to fathom, the forgiveness of God goes even further.

And as we continue on, we'll see that Paul encourages the Corinthians to exercise real forgiveness. And real forgiveness does not keep a record of wrongs. Verse 7. So that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him.

despite all that pain, the grief that Paul says that he himself experienced, and then the grief that he says the whole church felt in response to that sin, he says, forgive him.

If someone repents, we need to lovingly let go of the bad. we need to forget about it. Not, not forget about it truly as if you, you know, and just walk into another issue, but to not treat them poorly because of what they've done wrong.

[ 22 : 16 ] Among Christians, we should not have to serve a punishment to get forgiveness. We don't have to make people make up for every hurt that they have caused.

They simply have to show a changed heart and then the crimes are washed away and we will not hold it against them. this doesn't mean that you forget what happened or you let them do everything that they did before.

Say you had a, a pastor who was caught in an affair. When he, if he repents, you don't just let him come up and pastor here again. But, you don't let the fact that he was caught in sin keep you from loving and caring about him.

Forgiven people aren't second class citizens in the church. There's not the people who never make mistakes and then the people who have had to be forgiven.

The church is all people who have been forgiven. If we are forgiven, if we forgive like we are supposed to, we won't let people's past wrongs keep us from loving and caring about them.

[ 23 : 45 ] You must not hold grudges. We must really forgive. And sometimes that means we have to forgive over and over and over again.

like Richard read in Matthew 18, Lord, shall I forgive my brother if he sins against me seven times? And Jesus says, 70 times seven.

Blows it out of the water. Forgiveness never stops because God's forgiveness for us never stops. see, Peter thought he was being righteous by saying seven.

The Jews had a tradition in that time that you only had to forgive someone three times and then you could cut them off. And so Peter, thinking, I'm a faithful guy, I'll forgive my brother seven times. That's how good I am. See that, Jesus? See how good I am? And Jesus says, 70 times seven. And Peter's heart breaks.

[ 25 : 03 ] The only way we can have the power to forgive like this is by receiving great forgiveness from God. If I am laboring as a regular man in my flesh, I will never have the ability to exercise true forgiveness like this.

maybe for some people, but not in the way the Bible calls me to, which is all people who repent in as many times as they repent over and over.

Let's pray to God that he would give us the strength to forgive like this as we think about his forgiveness. remind yourself that we have a God who really forgives.

Every sin is carried away. There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8.1 We in Christ are treated as if we are just as perfect as Jesus was and had never sinned.

[ 26 : 15 ] If you trust in him, every last sin is washed away. Psalm 113 says, I will set your sins as far as the east is stretched from the west.

The west. every last stain is cleansed. Whom the sun sets free is free indeed.

Paul knows this forgiveness. He went around hunting and killing Christians. Jesus appears to him on the road of Damascus and says, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?

Saying, when you're killing Christians, you're hurting me, and yet Paul is forgiven. He says that I am the foremost of sinners, that I am the chief of sinners, but God shows his mercy to me, so that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example for all who were to believe.

If you feel the burden of any weight of sin, look to Christ, and that burden can be taken away.

[ 27 : 37 ] He says, come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my burden upon you, my yoke upon you, for my burden is light.

If you look to God, there is real forgiveness to be found there. No sin is too great to receive the forgiveness of Christ. And Paul, having experienced this forgiveness, knows that he must live it out. And so then he tells the Corinthians, you must to live this out with the brother who sinned. Now that he's repented, you must receive him just as Christ has received you and just as Christ has received me.

so that we rejoice in so great a Savior. As the hymn says, guilty, vile, and helpless we, spotless Lamb of God was he, full atonement, can it be?

Hallelujah, what a Savior. As it continues on, we learn that we must comfort those who are forgiven.

[ 28 : 50 ] Verse seven continues, comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. We should all know what it's like to feel guilty.

We should all know what it's like to be burdened by our mistakes. Many times I have wronged people and been deeply troubled by it.

And I have thought of the wrongs that I have done to my God and my heart's been heavy. A guilty conscience is a heavy burden. Paul here knows the pain of a guilty conscience and so he knows that the man who has repented is in need of comforting.

When people repent we must be quick to comfort them lest sorrow overtake them and they fall back into their sins.

Love and comfort is an important part of welcoming and forgiving people who have sinned. if you love a person you will not let guilt crush them after they have apologized.

[ 30 : 16 ] If you are thinking of yourself you will be happy to bring it up all the time to crush their conscience to make them remember remember when you did that to me?

oh remember how you let me down here just so that they they might still be guilty in your eyes.

That's what happens when you love yourself but if you love other people like Christ calls you to you're happy to say brother it's forgotten come here it's okay I love you if you find that hard to do hard to comfort people who have hurt you look to your Savior look to his scars the scars he bears for your sins we killed him and he says I will send you my comforter that you might have comfort he was pierced for our transgressions upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and yet we can read in revelation that one day he will walk in our midst and wipe our tears we pierced him and yet he comforts us so sitting in that comfort we must then go out and comfort those even those

who hurt us our

God is a God who comforts forgiven people and we should too finally Paul says therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him a great summary of all the things that have been captured here you should conduct yourself in such a way that forgiven people know that you have forgiven them and know that you love them over and over the instructions that Paul gives is to love to let go to love to care to comfort we should not be a bitter people who hold bitter grudges but a people who have the joy of real forgiveness maybe you've experienced this in relationships or maybe you haven't but I can tell you my closest relationships with people are the ones where we are both are quick to forgive love keeps no record of wrongs it is so painful being out in the world with people who won't forgive because I am so quick to fall short if you know me for long enough if you're close enough to me

I will let you down at some point and so if there isn't forgiveness there's no hope for me to have a long-term relationship with you but if there is forgiveness and quick forgiveness and real forgiveness there can be sweet fellowship like we have with Christ over and over grace mercy and love flow from Christ for us he says how many times should I forgive my brother seven times and Jesus answers not seven but 70 times seven if he calls us to that sort of forgiveness you can know that the forgiveness he gives us is even greater Lord how many times am I going to sin against you and you still forgive me seven times and he says 70 times 70 times 70 times 70 and on and on your sins are like a mountain unclimbable yet I have washed everyone away in summary today we have learned about church discipline which is a good tool that God gives us to protect the church to protect the gospel to show what a

[ 35 : 22 ] Christian is and to treat those who are falling away and we have learned that a forgiving heart forgives even though it hurts that a forgiving heart actually forgives and does not bear grudges that a forgiving heart comforts the guilty that it loves again and that it forgives because it has been forgiven remember remember this as we take the Lord's supper later on a memory of God's forgiveness for us and remember this as we pray the Lord's prayer together at the end of the service especially when we pray forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us this is how the Lord taught us to pray this is what the Lord commanded us let us do these things by his grace and the power of the Holy

Spirit please close with me in prayer Lord we thank you for so great a salvation we ask that you would strengthen us to love and forgive as we ought and forgive us even when we fail to do so in your name we pray Amen Amen