

A Man Who Can Forgive Sin?

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[0 : 00] Hello, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the pastor, Church of the Messiah. And those of you who have listened to some of these other sermons, this sounds a little bit different than what you normally would hear.

And so I just want to let you know that what happened is that on the 25th of August, I preached a sermon on Mark chapter 2, verses 1 to 12, the story of Jesus and the paralytic. And I did the sermon, it was recorded, and then something happened.

The person in charge of the recording by accident deleted the sermon recording and wasn't able to recover it. So what I'm doing now is I'm redoing the sermon, so to speak.

But I'm in an empty room and I'm going to do the best I can to redo the sermon. And so that's why things sound a little bit different. It's going to feel a little bit different as well.

So let's begin with a prayer. Father, I ask that you would pour the Holy Spirit upon us. Father, we both need forgiveness and we need to learn how to forgive.

[1 : 04] And we confess before you that we are confused about forgiveness. And so we ask, Father, that you would bring the wisdom of your word, the wisdom of your son, deep into our heart, that we might learn our need to be forgiven by you, our need to live out of the forgiveness that comes from you, and that we might learn how to forgive as he has forgiven us.

And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your son and our savior. Amen. Okay. One of the things that you hear all the time in the world, not only in the world, I heard it in the coffee shop just the other day.

You hear it in Christian circles as well, is that people have to learn how to forgive themselves. So it's one of those things that if they say it in a movie, people just say it as if it's great wisdom, that you have to learn how to forgive yourself.

Now, there's a bit of a problem with this. Let's just think about this for a second. A few years ago, a fellow who has since moved out of the city, there's a couple of years ago, a fellow did me great harm.

He wronged me. He betrayed my trust more than once, and I only discovered it later. He affected my reputation.

[2 : 18] He did something that ended up meaning that I had to spend a fair bit of money and a lot of stress to try to deal with it. It caused me leadership problems in my church.

He wronged me, and he did it intentionally, and he did it for his own advantage. And it wasn't right. And, you know, it's funny. In preparing this sermon, I was thinking about it, and I realized I think I've more or less forgiven him, but I don't think I've forgiven him all the way, and I have to go back to praying into the situation to learn how to forgive him.

But here's the point. He never has apologized. He's never owned up to anything he's done. He brazened his way through everything that happened and has never acknowledged anything as having been done wrong.

But let's say all of a sudden, because I know people who know him, I know people who are friends of his, have all of a sudden, I discovered that he's really starting to feel bad about this, what he did to me.

And he's brought it to God and confessed it to God, and now he's working on forgiving himself.

Now, just pause here for a second.

[3 : 25] This is like, you go, what do you mean? Like, I go, whoa, what do you mean he's working on forgiving himself? Like, why is he working on forgiving himself when he's never actually said sorry to me?

Like, shouldn't he actually try to apologize to me before he tries to forgive himself? Like, what does that even mean that he's working on? Like, in fact, it would actually make me think less of him, that he's trying to forgive himself without actually trying to make amendment of a life or apologize or anything like that.

You see the problem? And that's separate from another issue, which is an issue altogether with the whole issue of forgiveness, is that for many of us, it's almost as if we have to choose to be, do something which is just trust and get justice or forgive, and that you have to choose one or the other.

Because some of you might say, George, I don't even understand why you're trying to work on forgiving yourself. Like, why are you even doing that? Like, what you should have, I mean, not forgiving yourself, sorry, I misspoke. George, I don't understand why you're even praying to forgive the guy.

Like, George, you shouldn't have done that. What you should have done is you should have gone after the guy. You should have made sure everybody knew. You should have embarrassed him.

Like, you should have gone after justice rather than learning how to try to forgive him.

[4 : 35] Well, in the midst of these types of very, very current issues, there's a story in Mark's gospel about Jesus, which is very, very helpful for us to understand and try to think these things all through.

So if you're turning your Bibles to Mark chapter two, verses one to 12, Mark chapter two, verse one, and as you turn to that, it's the story which is famous amongst Christians is the healing of the paralytic.

And it must be considered a very important story because there's three, four eyewitness biographies of Jesus. And out of the four ancient biographies of Jesus, three of the ancient biographies tell this story.

And so it must be a really important story if it got told in three of the eyewitness biographies. And that's what Mark is in both, we know that Mark was both an eyewitness and an earwitness himself to many things in Jesus's life.

He was also a close companion of many of the people who were eye and ear witnesses of the things that went on in the story of Jesus. And he wrote when the eyewitnesses, many, many, many eyewitnesses were still alive.

[5 : 51] And in fact, actually, scholars have often believed that he did a little tiny interesting thing of putting himself in the story very briefly. If any of you have watched any of the Marvel movies, you'll know, I mean, now Stan Lee just died recently, but you'll know that if you watch those movies, they always had some tiny instant, just a few seconds maybe, where Stan Lee, the creator of, the guy who was behind Marvel Comics, where he gets into the story.

You see him in some ways as a bus collector or as a restaurant patron or something like that. And there's a, people believe that Mark inserted himself in the story as well.

Towards the very end of Mark's gospel, his ancient biography, there's a scene where Jesus has been captured in the garden. And this is the capturing in the garden of Gethsemane and Jesus is going to die the next day, but he's captured by soldiers and guards.

And the disciples flee. And there's a young man who'd been following along, watching everything.

And the soldiers go to grab him. And the man is so afraid that he actually, they grab his robe, but he runs and the clothes rip.

And he runs away naked, leaving his clothes behind. And many scholars believe that that was Mark having a Stan Lee moment. But the main thing to understand here is this, that what Mark is claiming to do in this book is he's trying, he's claiming to tell you a true story about Jesus and a real miracle.

[7 : 20] That's what he's claiming in the eyewitness biography. So here's how it goes. Mark chapter two, verse one, and it goes like this. When he, that's Jesus, returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home.

And many were gathered together so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And Jesus was preaching the word to them.

Now, just pause here for a second. Most of us are familiar with the idea that Jesus is from Nazareth. And he was born in Bethlehem, but he grew up in Nazareth. And now Jesus is in his public ministry.

And he's basically the center of his ministry now is a place called Capernaum. And it's 32 kilometers northeast of Nazareth. And it's on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, which is a very large inland lake.

That's his home now, Capernaum. You know, all the populations in the ancient world at that time were fairly small, but it was a sizable enough village. And it was a pretty important place of commerce for the region.

[8 : 24] And that's now the center of where Jesus is. That's when he's not out somewhere else. He goes home. He's in Capernaum. So what happens here? Verse three. Remember, he's preaching the word to them.

And the room's completely and utterly packed inside and outside. They're all hanging around the doors and the windows trying to hear him. Verse three. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men.

And when they could not get near Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Jesus. And when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay.

Now, just pause here for a second. This is sort of an odd story if you're hearing it for the first time. And, you know, this wouldn't work very well in our houses today here in Ottawa.

I don't know where you are when you're listening to this, but in Ottawa, this wouldn't work very well. You'd need chainsaws. And if you took a chainsaw to a roof and went through the different layers to make a huge hole, it would cause a huge problem.

[9 : 34] It cost tens of thousands of dollars to fix. And it wasn't that this was a, I mean, it was a bit of a bother back then, but where they lived, it's a very dry area. The roofs would have been flat.

It's fairly dry. Roofs were flat, flat. There would have been beams. And the beams would have been covered with thatch and then some mud. And there would have been some, an area of plank or something up there because people use the roof in a sense also as a living place, sort of like a very, very large balcony.

And so there might've been another type of a shady thing up there. So most of the houses back then would have had stairs around the outside to make it easy for people to go up and to be on the roof. And they'd have to walk carefully on the beams and go to the area where you could sit.

So it still would have been a lot of bother, the thatch, the mud, and you can just imagine the dust.

And you can just imagine, this isn't like a holy, quiet moment of awe.

The homeowner is probably yelling at these four guys. There's probably lots of cursing. And it's not a place of holy, quiet as these guys wreck a big hole in the roof.

[10 : 45] They've obviously come prepared with ropes and they drop the guy down right in front of Jesus. People move out of the way, banging into each other, out of the way, and they drop this guy right at Jesus's feet.

So how does Jesus react? Well, let's look in verse five. Here's how Jesus reacts. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, son, your sins are forgiven.

Now, just pause. In the original language here, by the way, it's a verbal tense called the divine passive. So it's very obvious in the original language that Jesus is saying two things.

He's saying that God has forgiven all of this person's sins or wrongdoing. And that, in a sense, Jesus has also forgiven this person. Jesus is God.

It's a very, very clear claim that Jesus is God. And that Jesus, as God, has forgiven this man of all of the sins, all of the wrongdoing he's ever done, all of the things he should have done but didn't do.

[11 : 46] You know, they're called like sins of omission. You know, you know you should pay the money, somebody their money back because you have the money in the pocket and they ask for it and you don't give them. That's wrong, right? That's a sin of omission. Or you take money out of their pocket.

That's stealing. That's wrong. So one's a sin of omission. One's a sin of commission. And Jesus is saying, all of your sins are forgiven. Now, this is weird, right?

This is a very, very weird thing. I mean, he didn't come there to have his sins forgiven. He's not asking to have his sins forgiven. He came there to get healed because he'd heard that Jesus was able to heal people.

And he came there, him and his friends came there and said to be healed, not to be forgiven. And you can well imagine, you know, you can well imagine that the guy and his friends think, well, that's very nice and very pious.

But at the end of the day, they probably are crushed. They're very, very disappointed. They didn't want to have some statement about their sins dealt with. They wanted healing for their friend.

[12 : 49] The guy wanted healing. And there'd probably be disappointment. Now, that's what's probably going on within them. But there's a group of other people there who are looking at it in a very, very, very, very different way.

And let's see what happens because it's not that they're just thinking this is sort of odd. He came for healing and the guy's forgiving his sins and their sense of disappointment. No, these other people, they heard what Jesus said and it sort of shocked them.

And they have a very, very different take on what happens. Listen to what happens. It's verse six. Now, some of the scribes were sitting there questioning in their hearts. Why does this man speak like that?

He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone? Now, just sort of pause there for a second. Now, the first thing you have to understand here is what's a scribe?

Okay. So, there's no real equivalent to what a scribe is. The version of the Bible that I've just read gives you a good literal translation.

[13 : 51] But what you need to do is you need to think about somebody who's both a lawyer and not only a lawyer but also a professor of law. And you need to know somebody who is an intellectual.

And you need to have somebody who's, who maybe is an expert in cultural studies. And then you also have to have somebody who's like a YouTuber commenting on the culture that lots and lots of people go to because they see this YouTuber as being very authoritative about what's going on in the culture.

And they want to hear his or her cultural commentary. And if you could think of somebody who's both a lawyer and a law professor and an intellectual and a cultural studies professor and a YouTuber all rolled up in one, you have a scribe.

Okay? That's what they are. They're these multifaceted experts in how the culture works, how thinking works, what means what.

And they're there. And what they pick up is not, wow, this is weird. This must be really disappointing to this guy to have this, you know, silly statement about sins being forgiven when he wants to be healed.

[15 : 06] They don't think that at all. They pick up instantly that Jesus has made a claim to be God. That's what they pick up on. And, and for us, we would take up the idea of somebody wanting to be God and thinking that's cuckoo land.

And some of you listening to this come to Church of the Messiah. Some of you listening to this have visited Church of the Messiah. Some of you listening to this have never been to Church of the Messiah. We're, we're in urban Ottawa.

There's lots of crazy people walking around the streets. I mean, not lots, but they're, you know, you don't have to go very far or wait very long before you'll meet somebody who's obviously, you know, mentally ill and who might think they're God or do other types of things like that.

But they don't think like that. They think this guy, here's a dude just standing there, obviously a human being. And what he's doing is he's claiming to be God. And from their context, it's blasphemy to, to try to think that there can be anybody other than only God is God.

And how can you be God? You can't make that claim. It's, it's just wrong. So what does Jesus do about all of this? Now, here's one of the things which is so interesting about Jesus.

[16 : 13] And you see it all the way through the, the, the, the biographies of, of him is Jesus walks towards the problem, not away from it. He walks right towards the problem to deal with it.

Look at, look what happens next in verses eight through 11. And immediately, right? Immediately, Jesus perceiving in his spirit that they, that's the scribes, thus questioned within themselves, said to them, why do you question these things in your hearts?

Which is easier to say to the paralytic? Paralytic, your sins are forgiven? Or to say, rise, take up your bed and walk? But that you may know that the son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

He then turns to the paralytic. I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home. I'm going to just read that verse 10 and 11. I'm going to read that verse nine through 11 again.

Which is easier to say to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven? Or to say, rise, take up your bed and walk? But that you may know that the son of man has authority on earth. That is not only that he has the power, the scribes say he has the ability to make that type of thing.

[17 : 26] He says that I have the ability, an authoritative ability. And just so that you can know that I have this authoritative ability on earth to forgive sins, he then says to the paralytic, I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home.

Now let's just pause here for a little bit and just think about what's just taken place in Jesus' response. So the first thing you have to understand here is that Jesus is not saying that the man's sin caused the sickness.

He's not saying that you need to forgive to be able to be healed. He's not saying that you need to be forgiven to be healed. He's not saying anything like that at all.

He's not encouraging the man to forgive and because he's forgiving, he's now able to psychologically forgive. It somehow frees him up from some psychosomatic problem and he's now able to walk.

None of that's going on. He's not saying sin caused the sickness or you need to forgive to be healed or anything like that. What he's doing here, and I think this is one of the reasons why this story is in three of the biographies, is that Jesus throws down the gauntlet.

[18 : 41] He throws down the gauntlet. Throwing down the gauntlet is like a bit of a challenge, right? It's an expression about making a challenge. He's throwing down the gauntlet. He's challenging every religion, every spirituality, every philosophy to put up or shut up, so to speak.

You know, what he's saying is, I'm going to give you some evidence that what I'm saying is justified. I'm going to give you some way to vindicate and justify my claims because, you know, talk is cheap. You know, Muhammad can say that he is the prophet of Allah. Well, but what's the proof? Like, what's the proof? You know, in Hinduism, you can say, well, that there's the reincarnation and there's karma and there's yoga and there's all these practices, but, yeah, like, talk is cheap. Like, how are you going to prove that, right? And you can have your native spirituality and you believe this and believe that and in a sense, Jesus is saying to them, yeah, but how do you prove that? Like, why, what evidence is there that I should actually believe that this is something true? And it would be the same as well. It would be the same for Marxism. It would be the same for different philosophies and theologies and personal spiritualities that people around us and maybe some of you who are listening have developed bits and pieces of this and that as you're trying to make your way forward spiritually and Jesus is saying that I'm not just talking about spirituality or religion as if it's untrue.

[20 : 09] It's just something like, it's like a personal thing that you happen to like that gives you a moment of peace. I'm making, I'm making claims about the very nature of the world, the nature of reality and I am willing to do something that vindicates, that justifies these remarkable claims that I make and I would say that only Christianity out of all the religions and spiritualities of the world is falsifiable.

Jesus lays down this challenge and it's only the Christian faith that lays down such a challenge and is able to meet it if you look at the evidence.

And the claim is that Jesus by his mere act of will alone is going to be able to heal this man.

Now some of you might say, okay, one moment George here, I don't understand how these types of authorities are connected and here's how they're connected. See the fact of the matter is, is that both are impossible so to speak, right?

On one hand, I can't say to you, a listener, all your sins are forgiven. I forgive all of your sins. You say, George, like you don't even know the things I've done. You don't even know me. I'm just listening to you on your podcast.

[21 : 26] You know, you don't know me. How can you, like who do you think you are that you can think that every single wrong thing I've ever done and every wrong thing I ever will do that somehow another George, you forget, like that doesn't make any sense, right?

So that's impossible but the healing's impossible as well. So here's the thing, what Jesus is saying and this fits in with the whole understand, the Christian understanding of the world and how the world has developed and came to be and Jesus is saying that if in fact there is a God who's created all things and sustains all things, if in fact there is a God who does exist, who has created all things and sustains all things, then if that is the case, every act of wrongdoing is somehow an act against him as well as the creation or the created being or the person that you've wronged.

and so only God is implicated in all wrongdoing and therefore you need God and only he can do something that might involve your forgiveness for every single thing that you've ever done because

he's the only constant in your life.

Your mom might not be the constant, your dad, your brother, your sister, your friend. Only God is constant if in fact there is a God that does exist who's created and sustained all things and the same God who's created and sustained all things is the only one who could perform by, in a sense, a mere act of will such remarkable healing.

So you see, what he's saying is that the two things are connected to point to the same God that you and I don't know whether or not your sins are forgiven because that's invisible and you can make some type of claim.

[23 : 06] Religions and spiritualities are making all sorts of claim. You know, you chant this mantra and it will help you in your whole cycle of birth and rebirth. You, you know, you say these prayers and it makes you draw close to the God or to the goddess or whatever and people can say all those things but there's no way of knowing whether those things are actually true or not.

But what Jesus is saying here is that if there is a God that does exist like that and I am able to do something that only God can do, that shows that as something that only God can do that these other things that only God can do, it makes sense that I can do them as well.

That's how the argument is working. And by the way, when I was talking about this to a guy in a coffee shop just very recently and he was asking me about it, he said, well, what's the historical evidence for this happening?

You see, this is the, there is no particular historical evidence for this particular miracle today although there would have been in John's, in Mark's time because in Mark's time because it was written while there were eyewitnesses who were alive, that would have meant that somebody who hears about this story, some pagan who hears about this story in the Decapolis, he can just get in a boat and go across the Decapolis and he can go to Capernaum and ask around as to whether this story had ever happened, see if he can meet the four guys, the four dudes and the paralytic.

I mean, you know, when it was published, the people who, over what I read, Mark's story, his biography of Jesus would have included people who liked Jesus and those who didn't like Jesus and all of them could have commented on it but you see, the big thing is for us is that it's helping to set the stage for the great thing which culminates each of the four biographies and Mark's biography included and that is the death of Jesus upon the cross.

[24 : 54] Everything in the story, just read the story of Mark or Matthew or Luke or John as a story and you'll see they all culminate with Jesus dying upon the cross and him being truly buried and on the third day the grave being empty and the resurrected Jesus or the message that Jesus is resurrected ringing out.

The tomb is empty. The grave clothes are positioned in such a way that only something like a resurrection of the body could explain what happened and people can hear that is something if you've never looked into it there's good historical reasons to believe that Jesus really did die. In fact, everybody understands that he was, very few people now would doubt that Jesus lived. Lots of historical evidence he lived. Everybody knows he had to die and there's lots of historical evidence, good historical evidence that points to the best solution to the evidence being that Jesus rose from the dead.

The gauntlet of all the, the importance of all the miracles is made clear in this story. And so, Jesus is claiming not that he's going to do surgery, not that he's going to pray to a God or God to do this, but that he himself by the mere exercise of his will will heal this man.

So what happens? Well, that's how the story ends. Look at verse 12. In verse 12, and he rose immediately, that's the paralytic man, he rose immediately and picked up his bed and went out before them all so that they were all amazed and glorified God saying, we never saw anything like this.

[26 : 40] So, some of you might say, oh yeah, yeah, they didn't know science. Listen, science only creates the wow. Just because they didn't know a whole pile of science doesn't mean that they didn't know what he was talking about.

The fact of the matter is they would have known far more about this than we did because, you know, there was a very physical, you know, people lived in tiny, tiny places and they didn't hire out help.

They did the help themselves. They got their hands dirty, so to speak, with each other's sicknesses and issues and if this man had been paralyzed for a while, they would have seen how skinny his little stick legs were.

They would have seen the atrophy of the muscle and what happens in this miracle is that it's not as if Jesus says this thing and then they all look and whoa, all of a sudden he's able to twitch his toe a little bit.

There must be some healing or whoa, look at this, we can stick a stone on his toe and there's a bit of a reflex and for us, it's okay, you know, if that happens, okay, it's good news, you're not paralyzed. There's still some feeling there, there's still some movement and it isn't that Jesus just did this but if you can just think about the fact that, you know, the man's muscles had atrophied and whatever it is, by the mere will of Jesus alone, new muscle is there in the legs new nerves are there.

[27 : 57] The problems that were there maybe that were causing blockages by an act of his will, they are removed, the new connections of the nerves and the new muscle that needs to be there, the new muscle memory that needs to be there, it's all created by Jesus.

We now look at that, it would have been a huge wow to them because they would have, the guys who carried him and probably helped his friend, they would have seen his little stick legs and then later on they'd say, lift up your rope, look at that, you have muscles again, dude.

Like you have flesh again, dude. Like that's what they would have said. And you don't have to have a science degree to understand the miracle, science just increases the wow.

and the implication of the story is that if he could do this, then it makes complete and utter sense that he has the authority to forgive sins.

So let's unpack this a little bit more as we try to bring this up to an end. Here's the first thing. God himself has invaded, you see, these are the wonderful thing about the stories of the gospel is that it's helping you to understand by a story, to enter imaginatively and emotionally into the story and it's teaching you at the same time at a story level profound, conceptual truths.

[29 : 14] God himself has invaded his fallen creation to begin to put things right by offering full and undeserved forgiveness to his sinning image bearers.

I'll say that again. God himself has invaded. Only God could do what Jesus just did. And Jesus just did it. So God himself has invaded his fallen creation to begin to put things right by offering full and undeserved forgiveness to his sinning image bearers.

That's human beings. So some of you say, whoa, George, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. Undeserved? Still sinning? Like, okay, that, George, there's just a problem here with this. Like, undeserved forgiveness and still sinning? See, here's the, here's the issue for us. It really, that's why I worded it the way it did.

Remember I said at the very beginning, you probably don't, but if you, you might remember at the beginning I said, you know, for a lot of us in our culture, it's as if you have to choose between forgiveness or justice. When you face a situation and something's wrong you've been wronged in some type of way and it's as if all of the different people are going to counsel you.

[30 : 33] They're either going to tell you, well, listen, forget about justice and forgive. And others say, forget about forgiving, get justice. And, and, and, and that's the thing.

You see, on one hand, we think, well, justice is a really, really, really good thing. But sometimes, you know, you're not going to get the justice you want and so you've got to learn how to forgive because it makes you feel better.

Or, or others will go from the perspective of it's very obvious that often people are able to forgive, truly forgive another person. There seems to be a type of peace and wholeness about them, togetherness about them, which we all desire to have.

And, and so you, you need to pursue forgiveness. But if you, if you do that, you sort of have to give justice a pass. Right? And that's why a lot of advice about forgiveness is either about learning how to forget what went wrong or giving the wrongdoer a pass, you know?

And so this, what I've just said is like, you know, the, the person's still doing bad and, and undeserved and a lot of times what we think of as trying to forgive somebody is just actually making excuses for them or believing their excuses.

[31 : 41] But, but, this is what's so amazing. And only the Bible, only the gospel grounds our belief that forgiveness is important and justice is important and only the Bible grounds and helps us to understand both forgiveness and justice in such a way that neither is violated and both are fulfilled.

Only the Bible does this. And that's what's being pointed to here in this story and is unfolded in the entire gospel. And, and, and, and you see, here's, here's what you have to understand.

You, you, my second point, you only forgive the person whose wrongdoing is inexcusable. This is what all forgiveness really is. You only forgive the person whose wrongdoing is inexcusable. There's, you know, the fact of the matter is, is if they have a good excuse, then, you don't really forgive them because they didn't do anything wrong. You know, if, if you, if you, if, if a, if an old lady, if I, I pushed an old lady really, really hard on the road and, or tackled her or something, jumped on her and tackled her, she'd, might say, she's going to have to figure out how to forgive me. But if, if she finds out that I did that to mean that she didn't get hit by a car, all of a sudden, she wouldn't be trying to come up with giving me an excuse.

[33 : 06] She'd be thanking me, right? So that's, it's always what's left over when all the excuses, the real, not excuses that are bad excuses, just like it's a pile of, you know, hooey that we try to get around taking responsibility for actions, but when there's real extenuating circumstances that make you understand the situation completely different, that's not forgiveness.

It's always about something that was wrong. And, you know, for Christians, since God knows everything, he already knows the extenuating circumstances. He already knows what they are. He knows them better than you know them. So it's not a matter of God having to know that. Forgiveness is always dealing with that which is left over, which is just wrong and has to be dealt with.

But, then we don't really know what to do about that because it seems as if, well, you'd, I don't know, like, George, here's the next point. If justice is, here's what the Bible would teach. If justice is compromised, it is not forgiveness. True forgiveness is a mercy that upholds justice. This is really important. This is what the Bible teaches.

[34 : 16] This is what the gospel grounds and helps us to understand. If justice is compromised, it is not forgiveness. True forgiveness is a mercy that upholds justice.

You see, that's what the Bible reveals about the God revealed in the Bible. Many of you have heard me say, I don't believe in the God that Canadians believe in.

I don't. If I, if the only God that existed was the God, if the only God that you could believe in was the God that Canadians believed in, I would be an atheist.

Okay? If the only God that you, that anybody had ever heard of was the God that most Canadians believe in, then I wouldn't believe in that God. I would be an atheist. I would think that God is bad in all sorts of ways.

I believe in the God revealed by Jesus and the God revealed in the Bible. And in the Bible, the God who is revealed is a God who is always just and always merciful. And he's 100% just and 100% merciful.

[35 : 18] And he's never merciful at the expense of his justice and he's never just at the expense of mercy. And what Christians believe about the cross is that in the cross, when Jesus dies in my stead, when Jesus, in a sense, sees my great need that I have done wrong and there's something that needs to be done about that and that because of the accumulated wrongdoing and failure to do right that has happened in my life, that if I was to really, in a sense, be judged for that, it would unmake me.

And so Jesus, out of love for me, comes and stands, takes my place, takes the punishment in my stead. And in that particular act then, justice is still given.

It isn't as if God just says to me, ah, George, you know what? I like your smile. I like your style. I like your jokes. And so I'm going to give you a pass. And you know, all those people who you wronged, who want justice, well, it sucks to be them.

No, that's not what happens. What the Bible teaches is that the full justice of God is on display when Jesus dies upon the cross and the full mercy of God and the forgiveness of God is available, is on display as Jesus dies on the cross.

That's why the glory of God is revealed in the cross. That's why God is revealed most perfectly and fully with Jesus dying upon the cross. And then you say, well, how is this possible?

[36 : 48] How is this possible? Well, here's another thing you have to understand to help you understand the cross. You cannot forgive a person. Remember I said earlier, if justice is compromised, it is not forgiveness. True forgiveness is a mercy that upholds justice.

Here's the thing. You cannot forgive a person without pain, in quotes, the satisfaction justice requires. You cannot forgive a person without pain, the satisfaction justice requires.

I'll give you an illustration about this. So let's say I have a friend who is moving to another country overseas. He can't bring his SUV with him. And so I have a conversation with him and we decide that I'm going to buy his SUV for \$12,000.

And just before he leaves, he's giving me a bit of a discount because he's tried to sell it, he can't sell it, he has to leave, he wants to sell it. And so we agree. And so I say, well, listen here, I can't give you \$12,000 right off the bat.

How about if every month I give you \$1,000 for 12 months? At the end of the 12 months, you have \$12,000 and here's \$1,000 in cash. And because he's my friend, there's no contract written down.

[37 : 59] He takes me at my word and he takes \$1,000. He gets on the plane, he goes to another country. And now, but he's hoping on that \$11,000.

\$11,000 is a lot of money. It's going to matter to him and he has plans for it. He's going to use the next month's \$1,000. He's going to use it to help buy some furniture. Every month, he's going to use that \$1,000 for me to buy some furniture and do some other things to get set up in the new place that he's living.

But the next month comes up and there's no e-transfer from me for \$1,000. There's no wiring of money. I don't do it. And in fact, he sends me emails.

He tries to call me and he discovers that I've changed my phone number and I've changed my email address. And month and month and month goes by and I don't pay him the money. I stiff him. I stiff him.

I keep the van, the SUV. I don't give him the \$11,000 that I own. And I take means to avoid him. Now, this eats away at him.

[38 : 59] He thinks about it and thinks about it and thinks about it. He thinks about it every time he's going to buy something and he realizes he was originally going to buy that thing for his new condo or his new apartment or his new house.

He was going to use the \$1,000 to pay for it. He thinks about going into debt himself that he hadn't planned or reducing his savings that he hadn't planned for. And he thinks about it and it irks him. I've betrayed his friendship. I've broken my word. I've hidden on him. I've ripped him off. And all of those things. And it eats away at him and eats away at him and eats away at him and eats away at him and eats away at him.

Now, by the way, just remember one of the things about forgiving yourself? If I told you that I was feeling bad about and I was learning to forgive myself, wouldn't you just say that's just bleepity bleepity bleep? That's not what required, George, if you've done something like that to learn to forgive yourself.

That doesn't mean anything. That's, in fact, deeply wrong. But let's go back to my friend. He wants satisfaction at a whole lot of levels.

[40 : 03] He'd like the \$11,000. He'd like an apology. He wants satisfaction as connected to justice. But let's say one day a person who's talking to him and says to him, we'll call him Bob, says, Bob, you're beating yourself up.

You know, he lives thousands of, he lives across the ocean, across a continent, across the ocean. You're never going to see him again. You're never going to get the money. And this is just eating away at you, making you bitter.

You're losing sleep. You just got to forgive him. And let's say by a bit of a miracle, he is able to forgive me. What happens? He has to pay himself.

He has to pay himself the satisfaction. He has to forgo the satisfaction. He has to swallow the loss of \$11,000. He has to swallow his desire for me to acknowledge I've done something wrong.

He has to swallow the thing he'd wanted to do to maybe let all my family and my friends in the church know that I've been a bad pastor and I've done wrong things. He has to swallow all of his desires for justice.

[41 : 13] He has to pay the satisfaction that justice requires. Why do people do it? The more you forgive, the more you are free from the evil done to you.

That's why our culture understands that there is something powerful about forgiveness. The more you forgive, the more you are free from the evil done to you. You see, the evil that I had done, if I had done this to that man, the evil that I had done to them, it eats him up.

It makes him angry, you know. Maybe it makes him afraid to come and maybe he can also be afraid to confront me because maybe I'll say, how dare you say that? Like, you gave it to me for a

thousand dollars.

You have the paperwork? Like, you know, you didn't sign a contract. I'm not breaking, just your word against mine and maybe I would win the argument and he would get red and flustered and embarrassed and all of that type of thing.

But the more you forgive, the more you are free from the evil done to you. He doesn't get consumed by all of this. The great human example about this over the last 20 or 30 years is Nelson Mandela.

[42 : 17] He wasn't a saint. By any stretch of the imagination, he'd done some wrong things. But the punishment, apartheid, was a great evil and the punishment done to him was a great evil. And one of the things which is so remarkable about Nelson Mandela is that he understood that if he was to be free and if the country was to be free and to move forward and prosper, they had to forgive.

They had to, in a sense, pay themselves the satisfaction that justice requires. And somehow or another, that was able, Mandela was able to do that. And we see that around us all the time, that people somehow or another are able, it's not forgetting and it's not making excuses.

It's not saying, well, you know, apartheid wasn't really that bad. Can you imagine Nelson Mandela ever saying that? Well, apartheid wasn't really that bad.

No, he didn't forget it. He didn't make excuses for it, but he forgave and he was free. But you see, here's the thing.

In a sense, in a sense, forgiveness, then, is a bit of a mystery. We know it can happen and we know it's important because when real forgiveness happens, we are free from the evil done to us.

[43 : 37] Only the gospel grounds the mystery of forgiveness. only the gospel. If that is true, if on the cross, Jesus, God himself, is dying for you because he loves you.

Jesus died on the cross to bear the satisfaction, in quotes, that justice requires for the inexcusable wrong that you have done and I have done.

In other words, he died that you might be forgiven. That is the gospel. Because he loves you, Jesus died on the cross to bear, in quotes, the satisfaction. He himself bears the satisfaction that justice requires for the inexcusable wrong that you have done, that I have done.

In other words, he died that you might be forgiven, that I might be forgiven. That's what's happening on the cross. And because Jesus is God, right, God himself has invaded his creation, created order, that is why you can see that anybody can forgive.

If it ever is possible, it grounds it. It makes it understandable if God is, in fact, behind it. He does it on the cross. That's just in terms of, but the cross is more than just grounding it.

[44 : 56] It's something very important, is that we, in fact, have been separated from our creator and we are in rebellion against him and we are separated from him and what Jesus does on the cross is more than just ground my ability to forgive.

He is the means by which I am forgiven by God so that I can once again become his child and live with him forever. And when, the satisfaction that Jesus does for me on the cross is for every wrong that I have done and every good that I fail to do from the moment of my conception to the moment of my death with nothing left over.

He knows it all. He sees it all. He forgave it all. And it's on that basis that I am made right with God. Not weighing my merits but pardoning my offenses.

A couple of last points then. Here's the first one. And if you want, you can go online and you can see this point. If you, I'm going to just say it very quickly. I just want to bring, I've already gone 45 minutes.

I just want to bring it to a close. Here's the thing. When you have done something wrong, you should never seek to forgive yourself. You need to die to your pride, humble yourself, acknowledge the wrong you have done, repent, seek to amend your life, where possible, make restitution, and then ask the other person for forgiveness.

[46 : 23] Say it again, but you can go online and see it if you want at Messiah.ca, at church, you know, just Google Church of the Messiah sermons on August the 25th. It's a sermon called The Man Who Can Forgive Sin.

Just say it again, when you have done something wrong, you should never seek to forgive yourself. You need to die to your pride, humble yourself, acknowledge the wrong you have done, repent, seek to amend your life, where possible, make restitution, and then ask for forgiveness.

And here's the final point I want to leave with you before I pray. Because of the gospel, I will come to Jesus for forgiveness. I will proclaim to all and sundry his offer of full forgiveness, and I will learn

to become one who forgives for the good of the world and the glory of the Lord.

I'll say that again. Because of the gospel, that's the good news of what Jesus came to earth to do and accomplish for you and me on the cross, all out of love. Because of the gospel, I will come to Jesus for forgiveness.

I will proclaim to all and sundry his offer of full forgiveness, and I will learn to become one who forgives for the good of the world and the glory of the Lord. Friends, there's no time better than now if you have not done it to call out to Jesus and ask him to be your Savior and your Lord, to thank him for dying on the cross so that the justice that you could not bear, that he would bear on your behalf, that you might be forgiven, and that by putting your faith and trust in Jesus that you can become God's child forever.

[47 : 56] You can be made right with God as you call out to him to come into your life, to be your Savior and Lord, that you thank him for what he's done for you.

Call out to Jesus. Father, I ask that you pour out the Holy Spirit upon all who have heard this, both those on the Sunday morning at Church of the Messiah a few weeks ago as I'm recording this and all who are listening to it now.

Father, help us to forgive. Grip us with the gospel and as we are gripped by the gospel, help us to forgive. Help us, Father, as we are gripped by the gospel to acknowledge when we have done wrong and seek forgiveness.

But most of all, Father, grip us again with the beauty and the glory of the gospel, how Jesus bore in himself the satisfaction that justice required so that I could be forgiven by you and by faith in Jesus become your child forever.

Father, grip us with this truth and this I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.