

Forgive the Inexcusable?

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[0 : 00] Father, we're going to open your word now. We're going to look deeply into your word. And Father, we're not always honest with you. We're not always honest, Father, that we don't really think your word is practical, that we don't believe your word, we don't trust your word.

Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would work deeply within us, that we might honestly come to your word and that your word might come with power into the very center of who we are, that we might be gripped by the gospel and become disciples of Jesus, confident and joyful in the gospel.

And this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Please be seated. So we're going through a different sermon series this summer. I need to start my clock. There we go.

We're doing a series of one-verse sermons, deeper, meditating on God's word. And sometimes it's actually two verses. It's basically one sentence. Today, as part of that series, we're actually going to, we're sort of looking at one long sentence, but practically speaking, we're going to camp in a few words at the very, very end of this verse.

And Andrew, if you could just put it up, we're going to read it all together in a second. And just so you sort of have a bit of a sense of where this is in the book, in the book of Colossians, in the first two chapters, Paul basically tells people in a very powerful way who Jesus is and what he accomplished in his life and in his death upon the cross.

[1 : 27] And then chapter three and chapter four address the question, well, if this is true, like if this is true, if this is who Jesus is and this is what he accomplished, then how should we live?

Like what does that mean in terms of how we live our daily lives? And in chapter three, which is where this new part of the book starts, Paul uses three sort of very simple images to try to launch into how we should live.

He uses the image of first of all, setting our mind on something. It's a very, very practical thing. If you think about it, every one of us, when we wake up in the morning, we have our mind set on something.

I mean, at a very short term level, my mind is set on going to the bathroom and then having a cup of coffee. I mean, that's how my mind is set as soon as I wake up. But throughout the day, we have our mind set on different things.

I got to do this. I got to do that. I want to make sure I don't do that. And our minds can be set on other things. Gosh, I'm still bothered that so-and-so said that to me. Or boy, I'm going to say something to them or whatever it is.

[2 : 24] But we have our mind set on something. And so Paul just says, the first thing you should do in terms of who Jesus is and what he's done for your life is you should set your mind on Jesus and think about where the gospel leaves you at the end of the days, which is in the new heaven and the new earth with him forever.

So set your mind on that. It doesn't mean you don't think about having a coffee, but just set your mind on Jesus. And then the second and third image are linked because if we think about it, all throughout the week, we take clothes off and put clothes on.

All week, we put clothes on, take clothes off, put them on, mix and match, take some off, put others on. And so Paul uses this simple image of taking certain clothing off and then putting certain clothing on.

And just before this, he's listed the sort of types of vices, bad things that we do. And he said, you should take these off. Just sort of imagine when you wake up or throughout the day, I'm going to take this off.

I'm going to take my anger off. I'm going to put it over here. I'm going to take my, you know, bitterness off. I'm going to put it over there. And then just so you don't walk around naked, he gives this image of putting some clothing on. And that's where we are in this verse.

[3 : 29] So if you would read the scripture text out loud with me, that would be very helpful. And it goes like this then together. Put on then as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another.

And if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Great passage of scripture.

Now, here's the thing, which is at the level of the Greek, you're just going to have to trust me, the original language, there's a very interesting thing about this verse. There's five things that we're asked to put on, right?

We're asked to put on compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. But the way that the verse works is that those can only happen, those five things can really only happen if we bear with one another and forgive one another.

That's at the level of the original language. That's how the sentence flows. In other words, it says, you're dreaming, you're smoking a controlled substance, which will soon no longer be a controlled substance in Canada.

[4 : 43] You're smoking such substances if you think you can be patient, patient with people without forgiving. If you think you're going to be compassionate without forgiving, you're smoking something.

If you think you're going to be humble or meek without forgiving, you're sort of smoking something. And that's how it works at the original language. And so what we're going to do, if you could put up the short form, Andrew, this entire sermon is us going to camp on these few words.

Can you say them out loud with me? That would be very helpful. As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Let's say it together again. As the Lord has forgiven you, so you must forgive.

I want to keep saying must also, but there you go. So very, very simple. Now let's just be right honest about it right off the bat. None of us here believe that. None of us do.

We all profoundly think it's impractical. We think it's all right. Sorry, some of you have, I've just offended some of you. I'm a bit too, you know, maybe, but maybe some of us more or less believe it most of the time.

[5 : 50] See, here's the thing. If you're a guest here this morning, there's something you have to know about Christians, is that we Christians know that with our lips and on the outside of our body, we're supposed to say certain things, so we do. We're very good at it, like trained seals.

But inwardly, we don't really believe a lot of this stuff. And often we don't want to be very honest about the fact that we're a bit divided around these things. This past week, just on Thursday, I had the great honor of being able to speak on Parliament Hill to some of the staffers there through the Parliament Hill Christian Fellowship.

There were about 20 people there, and it's a great honor. I take it as a great privilege when I get invited to speak there. I gave them an early draft of this sermon, which is what I do when I get invited to speak there.

I give them an early draft of what I'm working on. And I said to them that, you know, if we're honest, we don't think this is practical. And we don't think it's really something we should do in a whole pile of situations.

I said, could you imagine that if you go back and one of the things that you're dealing with with your boss is that the other party is slandering you? And not only are they slandering you, but they've been very, very effective in getting the press to swallow the slander and the lies and the innuendo and the spin.

[7 : 02] And the press is going like crazy after your boss. And it's just really terrible and upsetting all of the things that they're saying. And how many of you do you think would say to your boss that what you need to do is forgive them?

I didn't get anybody to put their hand up and say, that's what I tell my boss to do all the time. You've just got to forgive them. Just forgive the other party. Just forgive the Globe and Mail and the writers.

Like, hold on a moment. Like, you see, George, it's all right to forgive, like, for small things. But, like, for big things? Like, really? And I gave them this example.

There's no particular example, but we all know, and they all knew, by the way, nobody on Parliament Hill said things like this don't happen on Parliament Hill. I said, what if one of you, you know, maybe you're working for a cabinet minister or you're just working for an important MP, and the MP's been doing something naughty.

That's bad. And it comes out. And so the MP, there's a little bit of ambiguity around this, or the prime minister or the cabinet minister, they say, listen, it would be terrible for the party.

[8 : 09] It would be terrible for the cause. It would be terrible for the movement that we represent in Canada if I go down for this. So I'd like you to take responsibility for it to the staff worker.

In a sense, I'd like you to fall on your sword for me. I'd like you to fall on my sword for me. And I'd like you to take the blame, and I'd like you to say to the press that I, the, you know, the whatever, the cabinet minister didn't know anything about it.

They're completely innocent. It's all on me. I did it all. It's my fault. And the cabinet minister or the MP says to you, don't worry about it. I mean, it's going to be really hard for you, but I'm with you. I got your back, and me and the party will make it up to you later.

Yes, right? And then you do that. You fall on your sword. The press dumps on you. Maybe there's some even legal consequences to you or fines.

And then three months, six months, nine months, it's all over. You're waiting for the party or the backers to make it up for you, and they forget all about you. In fact, you're a hot potato. They don't want to have anything to do with you. And your career is ruined, especially nowadays with social media.

[9 : 18] That can follow you for the rest of your life. It might mean for the rest of your life, you don't get as good a job as you would have had if you hadn't fallen on your sword. And the cabinet minister and the other people, they just go on.

They're having a great life. Parties in the papers, all that. Things go on well, but your life is ruined. And then, what does it say here? As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Like, if we come across a woman who's been abused by her dad for years, do we tell her, as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive?

Well, why don't we? Well, it's because we don't really believe this is true. Right?

But as Christians, we don't want to say that out loud. So I'm saying it. So here's part of the thing. Part of the reason that we have a hard time with this text, in practice, as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

[10 : 29] Isn't it just, I hope you memorize this text. Well, here's part of the problem is because whether we're aware of it or not, we know our own heart. And so what goes on in our own heart? Well, what goes on in our own heart is we know what we're like at a certain level.

We know what we're like when it comes time for us to ask for forgiveness. Because that's what an apology is. So you do something wrong, maybe do a set of things wrong, and your wife calls you on it.

And you say, I'm really sorry for doing that. And then what's the very next word? But. And it's a big but.

And then we say, well, I'm really sorry for doing that. But. I am really sorry for doing that. Seven words. And then we say a couple of hundred words or a thousand words after the but.

But I was tired. Well, but I, you know, I, I, I, but, you know, you're overreacting. But, and you can fill in the blank, right?

[11 : 38] And what we've done is we've actually not asked for forgiveness. We've asked for the person to accept our deception and our excuses.

Can you say that text with me again, please? As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. So one of the reasons we don't agree with this text is because we're fundamentally confused about forgiveness.

So, Andrew, if you could put this up. And by the way, I have set an all-time record today for a sermon with sermon points. I, if you added it up, I think I have a 27 or 28 point sermon.

10 minutes a point. We're going to be here till late in the afternoon. No, just joking. If you can't put this all, if I, hopefully this is helpful to you. And if you can't, if you're curious later on, it will be on the webpage if you want to look it up.

But here's what forgiveness is not. Forgiveness is not believing their excuses. That's not what forgiveness is. Forgiveness is not being gullible.

[12 : 47] Forgiveness is not forgetting what they did. Forgiveness is not pretending you were not hurt. Forgiveness is not pretending it was not wrong.

Forgiveness is not letting the other person who wronged you off the hook. Forgiveness is not making excuses for them because their excuses sucked.

And you can think of some better excuses for them. And so you make those excuses for them. How many of us have lived with violent or abusive or alcoholic people and that's what we've done?

Made excuses for them. And we think we're forgiving them. Forgiveness is not turning a blind eye to their actions.

Forgiveness is not approving of what they did. Forgiveness is not saying that what they did was not really wrong. Forgiveness is not being deceived by the wrongdoer.

[13 : 51] Forgiveness is not succumbing to pressure from others to cave. Isn't that what happens so much? Like just think of the young woman who's been abused by her dad.

Maybe verbally, maybe physically for a long time. And what is it that the mom says? What is it that their siblings say? Come on, just like go along with it. It wasn't really that bad.

Like just come on. Like we like to be able to have a nice time around the supper table and here you are grumpy with a long face. Like come on. Come on. Forgive them.

Right? That's what they say. That's what we say. Forgive them. In other words, succumb to the pressure that we're putting on you and cave on this. Forgiveness is not encouraging injustice.

Forgiveness is not repressing what happened. Forgiveness is not living in denial. Forgiveness is not surrendering to the perpetrator.

[14 : 57] Forgiveness is not being an enabler to the wrongdoers and the perpetrators. None of those things are forgiveness. None of them. George, why are you saying that?

What's our text today? This is why this text is such an important text to memorize. The text says, As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Jesus doesn't do any of those 17 things I just mentioned. He doesn't say, he doesn't make the excuses for you. He doesn't turn a blind eye. He doesn't enable you. He doesn't succumb to wrongdoers. You see, the fact of the matter is, it's the very part, if you're a guest here this morning, one of the things I've been saying a lot lately is I don't believe in the God that Canadians believe in.

From a Canadian point of view, I am an atheist. I don't believe in the God that Canadians believe in. I believe in the God revealed by Jesus. And the God revealed by Jesus is very different than the God that most Canadians believe in.

And it's the very heart of the biblical DNA. It's the very heart of Jesus' DNA of the gospel. The very heart that never does God call evil good.

[16 : 12] Never. Never does God surrender to evil. Never. Never. Never. God is always just. He's always true. He's always merciful.

And he does forgive. And so none of these things that I just listed could possibly be what God means when it says, as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Because Jesus doesn't do any of those things. You see, it's also, if you could put up the next point, Andrew, it's also that forgiving another person does not mean that things have to go back to normal or that the wrongdoer will not face consequences.

Some of you know, maybe not all of you, but my father's a convicted pedophile, spent time in jail. He was a pedophile against young girls.

And I had a role in having him go to jail. And part of the role that I had in helping, I'll jump, in having him go to jail was that after we unearthed what he'd been doing for many, many decades, four women, a couple of them in their 40s and others in their 20s, decided that they would bring charges against my father, not so much because they wanted to punish him, but they wanted to make sure that he was on record as a pedophile so that if he ever went to a youth group or something and they had him do a police check, it would come out that he was on the list.

[17 : 44] And I, this is all family. These are cousins and I won't go into all the other details to protect some of the victims, but I was sort of with one other person was the one who unearthed it.

I was the one who confronted my father. It was a very, very difficult day. It was a July 2nd, quite a few years ago when I went to my dad and said, I know your secret and told him what he had been doing.

And, and so these four looked to me for support and encouragement when they decided that they were going to bring charges against my father and I supported them, encouraged them as the victims and I started to face tremendous pressure from my extended family to use my influence as a pastor to tell them that they had to forgive my father and forgive my father meant that he did not have to have charges pressed against him.

The pastor of my parents' church sent me letters telling me that if I was a real Christian, I would use my influence to tell these four people who were all Christians that as Christians they had to forgive and forgiving would mean that they didn't bring charges and so my dad wouldn't have to go to jail.

And it's caused, even today, a profound division in my family. I stood with the victims and the victims went forward and my dad went to jail.

[19 : 19] And that's had a rever... It's continued to have an effect right to today. But you see, what they thought was that forgiving meant that there's no consequences, that things go back to normal, but that's not true.

Forgiving is different than having certain consequences still befall a person. It's quite different. And, you know, another example is if somebody stole \$50,000 from us as a church, it would be this text, as the Lord has forgiven you so you also must forgive would mean that we would have to forgive the person who stole \$50,000 from us.

We're a small church, that's a lot of money. But you know what? After we've forgiven them and maybe even after and after they've been reconciled, potentially assuming that they've been penitent and want to amend their life, they could come back into our church because we've forgiven them, but they could never be treasurer again, could they?

Just as my dad should never look after young girls for the rest of his life, even if he's healed, and it would be wrong to put him into a place he can be forgiven, but the family should have accepted that it was a good and wise thing that he'd be on the list of pedophiles.

For the good of my father, the true good of my father, and for the true good of potential future victims. So you see, forgiveness, forgiving another person does not mean that things have to go back to normal or that the wrongdoer will not face consequences.

[20 : 57] If you could put up the next point, Andrew, true forgiveness always involves forgiving the inexcusable wrong done to you. True forgiveness always involves forgiving the person for the inexcusable wrong done to you.

And we all go, whoa, one moment. Do you see how confused we are? Didn't we all just agree that forgiveness wasn't accepting excuses?

Didn't we all agree that all, I mean, didn't we all sort of see the instant wisdom? See, this is the problem why we're so confused. You see, the problem we're so confused is the reason people don't pursue forgiveness is they think forgiveness is being gullible, it's being weak, it's being a doormat, it's wearing a t-shirt that says, please kick me.

It's, you know, it's being deceived, it's succumbing to perpetrators, it's succumbing to peer pressure. We think all these wrong things about forgiveness and that's why we don't pursue it.

That's why we don't think it's practical. Even though the Bible, for Christians, the Bible tells us that it's practical because I'm going to explain in a moment why it's unbelievably practical to the entire human race.

[22 : 12] And at the same time then when we say so forgiving, you know, because there are obviously sometimes mitigating factors for things, you know, and all, but when we think, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, forgiveness actually involves forgiving the inexcusable wrong done to you, we, because we want to sneak in excuses.

We want to return to being confused about what forgiveness is. You see, this text is confronting us at the level of the heart, who we are before the living God, who we really are before the living God.

But this is what forgiveness is. After you've taken away all of the mitigating circumstances, in fact, actually this is a really important thing for those of us who are Christians, a lot of times when we think we've confessed our sins to God, what we have done is actually just made excuses to God.

And then afterwards we get up our knees and we go like this and we say, ah, there you go, I've done a good job with telling God my excuses. We haven't actually just asked for forgiveness. Because we have a hard time believing that God will actually forgive us at a very deep level.

You see, unforgiveness, this is just a talk here to the Christians, when we don't forgive, it's a bit of a sign as to how real the gospel is to our heart. You know, fortunately, the gospel doesn't have to be perfectly real to our heart to be saved because God does all the work.

[23 : 45] Thanks be to God. I put my hand up to reach for him for mercy. He crosses the infinite distance. He does, deals with all my sin. He gives me the righteousness of Jesus.

He does everything. He holds on to me. I don't hold on to him. Thanks be to God. That's the truth about how the gospel works. But growing as a Christian is learning to start to have and allowing the Holy Spirit to start to bring the gospel home to deeper levels of who you are so the gospel becomes real to you.

And part of that process is realizing that as the Lord... Can you say... Could you put the text up again, Andrew? Sorry. Can you say that all with me again? As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

My hope is you remember this more than whatever I have to say. So... Like... Okay, George. How on earth can you actually forgive the inexcusable wrong which is done to you?

Well, before we talk about that, very briefly I have to talk just a little bit about what happens to most of us when we're wronged. And we go in a couple of different directions, maybe three sort of different ways that we go when somebody wrongs us.

[24 : 59] And rather than forgiving them, what we do is we forget about it or we make excuses and other words like that. But we actually... We're not really dealing with the wrong. The wrong is in there still eating away at us.

And one of the main ways that we respond to being wronged when we don't forgive is by bitterness and resentment. Bitterness and resentment. We think every day or maybe every week about the things that that person did to us.

The opportunities that were now lost to us. The innocence that we will never get back. The shame that we carry. The honor that we lost. The financial... The dollars that it has cost us to deal with this.

And we think about it and we think about it and we get bitter and we get resentful about it. And if you could put up the next point, Andrew. And here's the simple thing. Harboring bitterness and resentment is like eating laxatives and hoping that the other person gets the runs.

Never works. Use that example I gave on Parliament Hill. You fall on your sword. Your career is ruined. Your finances are never going to be as good. Your reputation has never been as good.

[26 : 07] And meanwhile, the guy you did it for, the gal you did it for, they're having champagne with the high and the mighty. They've forgotten about you a long time ago. And every day, you eat that bitterness, you eat that resentment, and you're having laxatives, and you're getting the runs.

They're not. Because it never works that way. Harboring bitterness and resentment over what's done to you. Being grumpy about it. It just bends our life out of shape. Another way we deal with it is we just...

We want to... We want to be angry at them. Here's a fellow that I know, and he became a Christian late in life, and he told me after he'd become a Christian that he realized that the way he...

That he had a motto when he was in business. And it sort of made him a bit of shame now, but his motto when he'd been in business, he'd seen it on a cup or a poster. He actually... He went to church all the time, so he had this biblical thing, but it was, you know that, Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.

And then it said, For I am the meanest SOB in the valley. And that's how we made it through life. You do me, I'm going to do it ten times to you.

[27 : 14] You slander me, you won't believe what I can do back to you. You take me on, you are finished. Who wants to be that person?

Who wants to be that person? And who wants to be a person who's eating bitterness and resentment, which is another way... And by the way, depression, a lot of times, depression, as you all know, is violence outward turned in on the self.

And we're not able... We want to be the meanest SOB in the valley. But the fact of the matter is, there's a lot of meaner guys and gals out there. And so we get depressed, turning the anger inside.

And then the third thing we can do is, we just often end up becoming completely and utterly cynical about the whole thing. Just defeated and cynical. We don't harbor bitterness, we don't harbor anger, resentment, but we are just cynical and we just, we've just in a sense given up life and we go through life giving up.

So, could you put the scripture text up again? Sorry, Andrew, you've been great today, by the way. As the Lord... Can we say this together again? As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

[28 : 27] So what is it? Here's... If you could put up the next point... Here's the reminder then. True forgiveness... If you could put it up, Andrew. True forgiveness always involves forgiving the inexcusable wrong done to you.

That's what it is. It's always forgiving the inexcusable wrong that was done to you. Forgiving the person for the inexcusable wrong that they was done to you. So how on earth can this ever possibly happen?

Well, it does. It has happened and it happens today. If you could put up the next point, Andrew. And I struggle with this wording and I know it's not perfect and I, you know, if I do this sermon 20 times, maybe I'll eventually get the grammar right or one of you will help me.

But here it is. Earthly forgiveness. That is the forgiveness that we actually see in life is a mystery. It's a mystery. We're going to talk about it more.

whereby you bear much or most of the cost of the wrong that was done to you. But you bear it in a way that results in you being free.

[29 : 39] And it's a mystery how it is it can happen. How it is that some people the wrong eats away at them and makes them cynical and defeated in life and lethargic.

For some, the anger and the wrong that's done to them just makes them bitter and resentful and grumpy. For some, the wrong that is done to them makes them violent and aggressive, makes them racist, just makes them foul-mouthed and anger-driven.

And why it is, though, that there is this thing called forgiveness whereby there is a way of, in a sense, bearing or embracing the true, inexcusable wrong and the cost that that has done to you and there is a way of bearing that that results in freedom.

The great example of this over the last 20 or 30 years is, of course, Nelson Mandela. Nelson Mandela who endured the terrible horrible horrible horrible horrible horrible horrible horrible horrible horrible horrible and all those decades lost in jail.

And I, he didn't forgive right away but by the time he emerged he had forgiven and he was the freest man in South Africa. He was freer than the people who hated him, freer than the people who feared him, freer than his own race, his own people who hadn't forgiven.

[31 : 15] He was free. Somehow or another and he's not a Christian. I'm using him as an example of how the fact is that somehow or another he didn't forget the wrong that was done.

He didn't pretend that there was no wrong done. He didn't excuse the wrong that was done. Somehow or another he took the wrong that was done to him and he bore it in such a way that, and it doesn't something that happens in a moment but in the far side of this act of forgiving which is a way of approaching the wrong in a way that when you it's, you've processed it all through or it's processed all through you that you're actually free.

You see, if you could put up the next point, Andrew, here's how we know that we've forgiven. When you finally forgive, you are left with a clear eyed freedom from bitterness and resentment fight or flight and tower or cower.

And how we know this, you see, that's one of the reasons why we have to forgive even the dead or the people who have done wrong to us 20 or 30 years ago and they've long forgotten about us. It might be a teacher or the coach who just was unbelievably cruel to you and long ago they forgot you existed and you're carrying things around but all of a sudden, maybe you see the person or you're in their presence or you see a picture of the person or you smell a smell that reminds you of the person.

Isn't it funny how sometimes a certain smell can trigger all sorts of memories? And as soon as you have those memories come back, all of those times you're feeling like your fist starts to clench, you tighten up or you start to cry or you feel depressed or you feel the bitterness.

[33 : 01] It means, brother and sister in Christ that you haven't forgiven the person because on the far side of forgiveness is a freedom whereby you can remember the person and you can remember all of those things.

You haven't forgotten them, you remember them but you can remember in freedom, clear-eyed freedom without bitterness, without resentment, without fight or flight, without towering over them or cowering under them because of their violence.

So the fact of the matter is, is that forgiveness actually happens both in Christians and in non-Christians. If you want to read a great book on forgiveness, look at the book not Amazing Grace but Amish Grace written by some sociologists analyzing what went on when the Amish people forgave the man who murdered the young girls.

I think it was in 2006 or 2008, not that long ago that it happened. It happens. So how is it this is even possible? What here you see is where the Bible is so helpful because I think only Christians can account for how it is that forgiveness is possible.

Could you put up the scripture quote again? Andrew, you've been great. Say it together with me. As the Lord has forgiven you so you also must forgive.

[34 : 18] See, here's the thing. If you put up the point now, the cross was God bearing the cost to forgive you of your inexcusable wrongs.

The cross was God bearing the cost to forgive you of your inexcusable wrongs. You see, when the Bible says that the Lord forgives you, how did he forgive you?

Actually, if you go back later on, I'm not going to look at it now, go back later on and look at Colossians 2, verses 13 and 14. And in Colossians 2, verses 13 and 14, Paul talks about how it is that Christ forgives us.

And the image he gives is this. He gives a very simple image to his hearers who'd seen many crucifixions. And here, it's very helpful. We have this reproduction of a stained glass window and it's, you know, very, very traditional and all that.

but you see, over the cross, it was customary in the time of the Romans that when somebody was crucified, they would often put on the actual cross the charge against the person that was leading to their death.

[35 : 28] And what Paul suggests in Colossians 2, verses 13 and 14 is that you, that George and you and Andrew and Diane and each person here, we're to imagine that what really happened on the cross is that as Jesus is dying on the cross, what's put on the cross is all the inexcusable wrongs that George Sinclair has done from his moral awakening to his death, which is still for me in the future.

Every inexcusable wrong for which a cost must be paid, every single, nothing left out, inexcusable wrong was listed on the cross and as Jesus is dying, he is bearing the cost of forgiving my inexcusable wrongs.

Clear-eyed, undeceived, perfect clarity, perfect knowledge. He bears them in himself. And because we Christians believe that Jesus is God, the Son of God, and that human beings are made in the image of God, it means that in a way that only he could do, it means that he can bear the cost of forgiving the inexcusable wrongs of every single one who is here in this room and of every single person on the planet because we human beings are made in his image.

And you see, this is what is so profound about the gospel is that that means that when Jesus dies on the cross, on one hand, it is something that happens real.

It really happens. It really happened on a dusty hill just outside the gates of Jerusalem. Like, it really happened. But while it really happens on earth, it is something cosmic happening at the same time.

[37 : 29] While it really happens in time, it is something happening eternal at the same time that has bearing on every, every time. While it's really happening in a particular place, because of who he is, it happens and it's available for every place, every time, every person.

That the Lord bears the cost of the inexcusable wrongs that we have done and pays that cost so that you and I can be forgiven.

So this mystery of forgiveness, Christians believe in common grace. Nelson Mandela, I don't believe he was a Christian, but when he is able to forgive, he is in a sense participating in this mystery of what Christ has done.

Not in a way that will save Nelson Mandela, that we have to put our faith and trust in Jesus, but this mystery is a true mystery. It really happened. It really broke into our time.

And even people who can't acknowledge the source can experience the fruit. But for those of us who are followers of Jesus, Andrew, could you put up the scripture text again?

[38 : 45] As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. We can understand Jesus forgiving the inexcusable in us.

Just want to dry it up in a bit of a close. If you could put up the next point, Andrew, just to try to bring it to a close, one of the things that you can pray is that God teach me, lead me, and help me to forgive.

God teach me, lead me, and, oh sorry, I got that out of order, didn't I? No? You did it. Okay, we'll do this one, and now I have it in the right order. So here's a few things, very quick things about forgiveness.

Forgiveness, generally speaking, is not a moment, it's a quest. By that I mean is it's not that you have some emotional breakthrough and in a moment just like that you're able to forgive. I believe in the sovereignty of God, I believe in miracles, and so I believe sometimes some people in an instant are able to forgive.

I believe that happens, but generally the main way that the Holy Spirit works in a Christian's life is through a longer process. I had a man who assaulted me in my office quite a few years ago, and I had to fire him the next day.

[39 : 57] Because he had a very important leadership role in the church, and it took me at least 12 years before I was able to forgive him. I had to pray almost every day that I would forgive him.

And then one day he came to church, and I realized that I'd forgiven him. That somewhere along that line I had forgiven him. And a quest means that it's not just something you've done in a moment.

And the second thing about forgiveness is that you have to ask the Lord to show you. It's a good thing to ask the Lord to show you who you need to forgive. If you are dealing with regular grumpiness, I have a shock for you.

Being grumpy is not a fruit of the Holy Spirit. And if you have a regular grumpiness, it probably means that you have someone that you haven't forgiven that you've got to forgive.

And I'd actually also say this to two other types of people, and I include myself at this. If you have a problem with being very timid and unable to confront, it probably means you have some unforgiveness in your life that you haven't dealt with.

[41 : 08] If you are very overbearing and violent with people, it probably means that there's some things that you haven't forgiven. And so it's a really good thing under God to just say, Father, I don't think I have this unforgiven, but no, Father, I am grumpy so much.

And now George told me it's not a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Dang. So, Father, please show me who I have to forgive or what I have to forgive.

And then, thirdly, ask the Lord to help you forgive. He loves hearing that prayer from us. Ask the Lord and say, Lord, I can't forgive this person.

I want to forgive them. Help me to forgive. And say that prayer every day because here's the thing, the final thing. Seek to forgive until you are free. Seek to forgive until you are free.

So just now, that was the other thing. A couple of things. You know, one simple thing, especially if you're not a Christian and you're not quite sure if you want to bring Jesus into it, everybody can pray this prayer. Obviously, Christians have it in a far more powerful way.

[42 : 17] God, teach me, lead me, and help me to forgive and fill in the blank. But the thing I want to end us with, if you could put up the final prayer, number 11, if you could put that up. Yeah, it's a bit of a thing. This is how we're going to end.

You can sort of read that. I'm going to invite you to say this prayer out loud for me, with me. I'm going to pray it too. And it's just, it's a prayer that helps to encapsulate our need for forgiveness and just what Jesus has done for us.

And I would suggest that for some of us, we could take a prayer like this, maybe fill in particular a certain spot, like a little blank about help me to forgive a particular person. But this expresses the whole text.

And so I invite you to stand as we bring this sermon to a close. And if the Lord has put it on your heart to forgive, then maybe you want to pray this prayer with me. And by the way, if you have never given your life to Jesus, this can be your conversion prayer.

This can be the moment that you ask Jesus to engrave the gospel, what, who Jesus is and what he did, and engrave it, write it right in your heart. And it can be your conversion prayer.

[43 : 21] And for us, it can be a prayer. And for those of us who are Christians, it's a prayer of growth. So please pray. If the Lord puts it on you, you don't have to pray it out loud. If it's not, it's not floating your canoe, that's, but if it's, if the Lord has touched you today, I invite you to pray this along with me out loud.

Dear Lord, I thank you that on the cross, you paid all of the cost and forgave the inexcusable wrong that I am responsible for.

Please pour the Holy Spirit deep within me and engrave the gospel on my heart so that I will remain yours forever and forgive the inexcusable wrongs done to me, living free for your glory.

In Jesus' name, Amen. A prayer that we can pray the rest of our lives. Father, pour out the Holy Spirit upon us. Pour out the Holy Spirit upon us. Pour out the Holy Spirit upon us.

Draw us to Jesus. Help us to remember who He is and what He did for us on the cross. And help us to remember it more and more and have that become more and more real to who we are.

[44 : 28] And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.