

Matthew 18: 15-35 // Forgiveness

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 August 2026

Preacher: Earl Buchan

[0:00] But that's not my heart for today. We are going to talk a little bit about conflict and we're going to definitely talk about forgiveness, but I hope you'll feel free as we walk through this together.

Because this really is a passage of freedom. It's a passage of release. And so I want to approach it that way. It's always hard talking about difficulties that we have with one another conflicts that pop up.

And I'm so grateful that the Lord gives us his word to help us walk through it in a proper manner. And when I say that, I just mean in where people are not wounded, but they're actually built. Where people are not crushed, but they're actually forgiven and released. And sometimes there's even reconciliation. We'll talk about that difference in a few minutes here. I'm going to start with actually verse 15. I want to go back to that just simply because we need to start with, I think, the mechanism that Jesus is sharing with us about how to approach things when people step on our toes.

Or even how to receive it if we've stepped on someone else's toes. Jesus is addressing conflict in the body of Christ. And one of the things that I really noticed immediately is that he did not seem surprised whatsoever.

[1:15] It's not like he was sitting there and saying, you know, heaven forbid, you know, if you guys have conflict. It wasn't like that at all. It's like, when? Not if. When? When your brother sins against you, right?

It's going to happen. Disagreements are going to happen. We're going to have differing opinions. And that's okay. That's really okay. How we handle it, I think, is where the real test is for us. Not whether it happens or not. It's not a bad Christian. It's not a bad church that has conflict or disagreements. But how we handle it can reveal what's in the heart. And that's kind of what I want to talk about today for the most part.

Verse 15. If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you've gained a brother. So notice, first off, it's between two people.

Now, what we as human beings do really well is we gather what I call the torch and pitchfork crowd. Okay? If you know what I'm talking about, great.

[2:21] If not, it's just simply that's like, hey, hey, this happened. I don't like that this happened. This person offended me. Didn't he offend you too? Yes, he's offended us. Oh, we are offended. Right?

And let's get other people who might be offended. Come on. You're offended too, Diana. You're offended by this, right? Let's all offend him. Aaron, what about you? Kyle? Okay, now we're all offended. And that's what can happen if we're not careful.

As we start a brush fire. Okay? That just takes a life of its own. And here it just simply says, Go to that person yourself. This should be a one-on-one thing.

He has stepped on my toes. It kind of hurt. I haven't even figured out why it hurts yet, but it did, and I was hoping we could talk about it. And the process is just simple from there as well.

Now, when Jesus says, If he listens to you, we assume that he hears you with agreement, but that's not what it says.

[3:20] When we have someone that's done something and we bring it to them, what is our natural tendency? We want them to say, I'm really sorry. Now, if that happens, that's awesome.

But that's not what Jesus is saying here. If they listen to you. Now, if someone just kind of hears you out and says, Oh, you're just making it up. You're a drama llama.

You know, forget it. I'm not going to listen to you. Well, that's not listening. That's not hearing you out. But someone may have a differing opinion of what happened. And you say, Okay, I hear that

this happened.

I need to think about it. Right? That's not a negative. They're listening to you. And it says, If they listen to you, you've won a brother. That's good. Because now you're in agreement that something happened.

It may not be reconciled and figured out at this point. That's okay. All right? There's a process here. Jesus, by the words he says here, is not requiring that there's a victory over the person if they hear you out.

[4:22] That is the victory in and of itself. It's not overlording. It's not demanding submission. Okay? It's just, Have I been hurt? Or has this person just simply pushed me away and rejected me?

So let's read verses 16 to 18. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile or a tax collector.

Your translation might say heathen in place of Gentile. Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Now this is an interesting process, this whole thing.

If you go to someone and you say, you stepped on my toes. I didn't like how you said this. You know, I'm not too sure I like your attitude over this, and I feel offended. All right?

[5:24] If they say, okay, let me think about that, there might be an immediate like, I'm really sorry, I didn't mean it that way. And all that can be diffused very quickly. As opposed to the torch and pitchfork crowd, which now you're dealing with a posse, right?

And everybody's just like, we're offended! And we don't want to get to that place. That one-on-one is important, but if that doesn't work, if you're feeling rejected even then, you take someone else. Now, the way that I've looked at this before, is that this is not to gang up on them. This isn't to say, oh man, well, we're going to really, really dominate this.

It's not what it is at all. It's simply because you might be the one in error. I had a situation where a guy approached me, and wanted me to be the witness to something.

I knew the situation a little bit. I was pastoring the church, and I had some idea of what was going on, but he really wanted to stick it to this other guy. And this other guy, you know, we sat him down, and the way that this whole thing went, the guy who called me to the meeting wanted me to be on his side.

[6:30] And I'm thinking, I don't know the truth of this yet. After some conversation, it was very clear that the guy who called me to the meeting was actually the one that was the offender.

He was one of the people who was like, how dare you be offended at how I offended you? Right? How dare you be offended that I offended you?

How dare you react that way? That was his whole take on it. That's not a healthy way to be. And I had to instruct the guy, and I was talking to him, and you know, and immediately what he says, you know what? I don't even like you.

I think you talk about Jesus too much in your sermons. And I was like, okay. I was like, all right, you got me. That's pretty funny. I said, I'm not too sure how you teach from the Bible and not take advantage about Jesus, but that's great.

That's awesome. Thank you for that. Like, it was good. But long of the story short, sometimes that witness is there to help bring the truth about. There have been times where just my personality, my type of style of communication, and I try to be careful, I can't quite find the words to really make it stick.

[7:32] And so I need somebody that's got a little bit more of a logical path. Somebody who can see it from outside and say, I think what he's trying to say is fill in the blank. And then after they do that, I'm like, yes, that, right there, that, yes, thank you.

So the witness is to bring about truth. It's not about ganging up on somebody. It's just simply that you didn't hear me the first time. I didn't feel heard, and I'm realizing maybe it's my style of communication that's failed us here.

So I'm bringing somebody else just so that they can help along with this. That's the beauty of the witnesses. Now, if that is rejected, oh, you're a drama llama, forget it. I don't, I don't even like your face, you know, whatever.

If they reject you and there's going through that, then you have to take it to the church. And what that commonly means is, you know, you've got to look to the pastor, the board, right? The people who work together in spiritually safeguarding the church, you bring it to them. And then there's conversation. Okay, what do we need to do? Oftentimes, one of us will go to that person and say, you know what, I think it would be really good if we all got together on this and just talked.

[8:40] It seems like there's just some great misunderstanding here. And I, you know, I will say this, it is a rarity that I've ever had in teaching Matthew 18 as a method of conflict resolution.

It's a rarity that I ever have anybody get to that third stage. Okay? It's rare. When it happens, oh boy, that's something for the history books, but it's like, it rarely gets there.

And if it does, then there's very clear guidelines here. You have to start asking the persons simple questions. Is this your church? You seem to really dislike it here.

I mean, we're really trying here. We're trying to have you be okay to feel loved and heard, but people are getting their toes stepped on here and we're just not too sure what to do about it without your help.

Are you willing to help us with this? Oh no, you're a bunch of drama llamas. I don't like this. I don't like your face. What I've had to do in the past, and I said this, and I'll say this again, this is a rarity. Why don't you take a couple of weeks off church?

[9:44] Just take a couple of weeks of breather. There's great churches all around. Visit somewhere else. And then in that time, just think about that question. Is this your church? Because if it is, you'll fight for it.

If it is, you'll look inside and say, okay, maybe I'm a part of the problem here. Maybe there's something I need to do, some way I need to submit in order for there to be unity in this body.

And if the person doesn't ever come back, you have the answer. But if they do, you'll love them.

Because this is the thing. Jesus still loved the heathens, the Gentiles, the tax collectors.

It wasn't like, okay, we're just going to ghost them and never talk about them again. Any leader who says, you can't talk to anybody who's left the church, well, that's a cult.

Okay? No, love them. Remind them that they're still a part of this body and spirit. Remind them that the Lord loves them. Pray for them on a continual basis.

[10:46] If there's something you can do to be a part of building that bridge, build that bridge.

Okay? It's really important. This is church, our community, this is God's community.

It's not mine, it's not yours, it's not ours, it's the Lord's. This is a rental. We're blessed to be here.

This is a wonderful group of people in a wonderful place. So we have to treat it like that.

And love one another through conflict. And if we step on one another's toes, it's okay. Sometimes I've just had a bad day. I said this in class earlier too, it's just like, you know, when you're in ministry, you get shot at a lot.

And, you know, nine times out of ten, you just go like, wow, that person's having a bad day. I need to pray for them. Right? If it's repeated behavior, then maybe it's something I go and say, you know, I kind of feel like my toes were stepped on there.

Can you help me out with this? How can I love you through this? What's going on? And you approach it with curiosity and love. And suddenly, you notice the temperature just starts to lower. You know, the heat of the situation starts to diffuse.

[11:46] But, there is a magic bullet to all of this. It's silence. If we are silent over this, then we're killing something.

Don't, don't be silent. Be vocal. Talk with people. Share the pain or the wound that you've had. The worst thing that can be done is you say nothing and then it just takes root and it festers.

And then pretty soon before you know it, that invisible root goes deep and deep and deep and suddenly you have a pretty significant thing to excavate in your heart. Silence is a killer.

That's the magic bullet to killing relationship. Don't be silent. Be vocal. If somebody's hurt you, tell them. If you need help communicating it, get a friend.

Not a posse. Not torching pitchforks. Get a friend and just say, I need help communicating this. Will you pray with me? Alright? Go through this process and this step.

[12:53] Jesus himself gave us this process. I think that alone is worthy of respecting it. There's something to this. Okay? The church shouldn't have to be involved.

Multiple people shouldn't have to be involved. In a perfect world, when conflict happens in a church, most of us should be like, I had no idea that was happening. If we all know what's happening, that's probably not a good thing.

You see? So don't be silent. Bring it up. Proverbs 18:17 says, The one who states his case first seems right until the other comes and examines him.

So that's the thing. You may feel fully justified in what you're feeling. It is also possible that in your justified feeling, you've hurt someone in the process.

Okay? So, we may feel right, but it's also good to bring it to a witness, bring it to a friend, a neighbor, help, that will help out. That we can look at this and say, where's the truth in all of this? [13:56] Where is it? Verses 18 to 20. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

And again, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.

So, this is rabbinic language. All right? This is very, very specific rabbinic language. It's something is permitted or not permitted. Something is allowed or not allowed.

And as you get to the point where it's like you have to ask someone, is this your church? We are in agreement as a board that you're actually causing a wildfire of disunity.

It's time to take a break. The Lord is saying, if that's done in humility, because I have seen that done wrongfully as well. I've seen people removed from churches out of pride and ego and it be done poorly.

[15:06] All right? I have seen that. I was actually a victim of that at one point. I don't like to use the word victim, but, you know, we were removed from a church like 1991, something like that.

It was a while ago. And it was because we supported the youth group and we were supporting the growth that they were having and the youth leaders did not see that because they weren't involved and so they wanted to close down the youth group and we're just sitting there thinking, what?

That is so backwards. Well, our disagreement with that got to the pastor. We ended up meeting and we got kicked out of church. That was horrible. It was an awful experience.

And ever since then I've been very sensitive to what it means to have someone to say, why don't you take a couple weeks off of church? I don't say that lightly because it hurts. And let me just extend this to you now because one of the things that I've done most often as a pastor over 17 years now, as a senior pastor anyways, is apologize on behalf of the church.

Not the churches that I went to, but the churches in general, worldwide. I just want to say this, wherever you've come from, whatever history you've had, I'm truly sorry.

[16:20] I really am. I'm sorry for the pastor that has wounded you. I'm sorry for that. I hope that you'll find healing, that you have found it. Maybe a part of what we're going to get into here will help bring it about.

But all that to say is I am truly sorry. I really am. The process of reconciliation is done in humility. It needs to be. It's quite binding, even if the unrepentant one simply leaves church. It doesn't justify everything. Church discipline can be handled very poorly.

I've seen it handled poorly. I have handled it poorly. I've had to learn the hard way through some of these things. You know, when we have people in our church, everybody is coming in with their own frailties, their own difficulties, their own hurts, their own challenges.

And so to treat people just as seat warmers and tithers, I think, is one of the worst sins a pastor can do. We're all people. We're all humans. We're all children of God. We've all come from different places.

[17:27] Some hurts persist. And that's why I want to get into this next passage that Maria opened up for us there. Verses 21 to 22.

Then Peter came up and said to him, Lord, how often will my brother sin against me? And I forgive him. As many as seven times. And Jesus said to him, I do not say to you seven times, but 77 times. Now, I love Peter. There's so much about Peter that I really appreciate in just his personality. He's a boots-first kind of guy. What I mean is that if he's going to jump into anything, it'll be boots-first on the ground and he's ready to go.

And sometimes a little bit before he should. But that is his heart. And I really, really appreciate it. So when he's doing this, he's not trying to sound a little smart. Because again, in the rabbinical

thinking, you would forgive someone two or three times and then distance yourself.

So Peter's looking at it and saying, well, what, seven times? I'm trying to be gracious. I'm trying to be loving. So seven times? And Jesus is saying, no. I honestly wonder if it wasn't Peter that was thinking, I'm going to get an attaboy out of this.

[18:35] You know, Jesus is going to say, hey, you're right, good thinking, that's gracious. And it's not that Jesus was tearing him down. He was just simply saying, no. You see, love and forgiveness is unlimited, dear Peter.

It is not for you to withhold or to count how many times you forgive someone. That is the heart of what is being said here. But I'm going to get into that in a couple minutes.

Your forgiveness to another person is to be unlimited. unlimited. That's what's behind the 70 times 7 or the 77 depending on your translation. That is not easy to do, is it?

You see, I don't look at forgiveness as a destination where it's one and done. Okay, I've forgiven. Now I have to live that forgiven life. Forgiveness is really a process. It is a process that takes us an entire lifetime.

Some hurts that we've received can't just be solved by someone patting on the back and saying, just forgive. It doesn't feel that way. Some hurts we've received are so deep, the wound so real that we bleed for many, many years in our heart.

[19:44] Forgiveness is something where we come to it and we forgive and then when that thing pops up again, when we step on that landmine or trip that tripwire, we learn to forgive again.

And then some years may go by. It may move to the background in our memory and then you'll see somebody that'll bring it up again and then it's like, okay, I need to forgive this again.

That's a realistic day-to-day approach to forgiveness. It is a process and we have to keep on forgiving. There's some things that are very easy to forgive. Oh, you bumped into me in the hallway. No problem, man. If you're holding on to that after 10 years, well, you got some things to work on. But you know what I mean? The hurts that bleed inside, they take time. They may take counseling. They may take talking to someone. They may take some healing in many more ways than one. Let that process be a process. It would be weird to keep a list of wrongs and say 78th time, oh, now I can withhold forgiveness.

[20:51] I don't think Jesus is teaching us to forgive less through this. He's showing us, no, no, no, forgive more. Forgive more often, more deeply. Forgive more, not less.

Do not withhold. Verse 23 to 25. Therefore, the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. And when he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him 10,000 talents.

And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold with his wife and children and all that he had and payment to be made. Now, to give some rough financials to all of this, back in the day, and I'm not condoning this by any stretch of the imagination, back in the day, you could sell a family with kids for about seven talents.

That does not even begin to cover the debt. Not even, not even close. It was a punishment. 10,000 talents, people have argued about this, and again, there's some silly things to argue about, and this is probably one of them.

It could actually, I mean today, \$12 million or a billion. Okay? Depending on a whole bunch of things, talents were differently weighed. I mean, there's a number of things factory in there, but I think you get the idea.

[22:06] It is an impossible sum to pay off. Impossible. And that this is what this guy owed. Verses 26 to 27. So the servant fell on his knees imploring him, have patience with me.

Now, I want to stop there. I am pretty sure this made the whole crowd laugh. All right? Like patience. Like give me a little more time and I'll pay off this billion dollar debt.

Right? I'm sure when Jesus said that so the crowd wouldn't want to come on now. You can't be serious. There's patience. No, you have all patience in the world that's never going to pay off this debt. Yet it's used here.

Okay? Have patience with me and I'll pay you everything. And out of pity for him, the master of the servant released him and forgave him his debt. It doesn't matter how patient the master would have been.

He would never have paid this off. It doesn't matter how many side gigs he had developed on the way. He would never have paid this off. He was being forgiven an unpayable amount.

[23:06] Just like you and me. We have been forgiven an unpayable amount. And something that I've had to come to reckon with this week is that I cannot possibly be offended the same amount that my sin has offended God.

Not possible. I cannot create a list of offenses, hurts, and sin, and some of them, I would think, are actually large. I cannot create a list of that and say, God, I've had to forgive more than you.

No. I wasn't raised in a Christian home. I have things that I regret. There are moments I wish I could replay in the sense of redoing them.

Okay? There are things that I think the Lord has allowed me to keep in memory to remind me of how forgiven I am and to be able to extend mercy to those who ask for it, to those who need it, to those who don't ask for it.

And that's not easy. But it doesn't matter how many times someone has sinned against you, it will never equal what our sin has done to God. Because the only price, and we sang about this, the only price that paid that cost was death on a cross, that crimson cost.

[24:23] When the same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants, this is verse 28, 29.

He went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him he began to choke him. This is actually where we get the word throttle from, is the original language of this. So he's grabbing him by the throat, he's throttling him, okay?

Just keep that in your mind. Pay what you owe. So his servant fell down and pleaded with him, have patience with me and I'll pay you. He said the exact same thing that this guy just said to his master. Now a hundred denarii, it's about a third of a year's working wages for an average working day. So it's not nothing, but it is a lot less than what was just forgiven.

A lot less. Not a small amount, but it is nothing compared to the billion. Nothing. Verses 30 to 35, he refused and put him in prison until he should pay the debt.

[25:30] When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed. And they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then this master summoned him and said to him, you wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.

And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you? And in anger, his master delivered him to the jailers until he should pay all his debt.

So also my heavenly father will do every one of, do to every one of you if you do not forgive your brother from your heart. Have mercy on one another.

When our toes have been stepped on, when our sensibilities have challenged, when our minds have been offended and it reveals our heart, have mercy on one another.

You have been forgiven a great debt in Jesus Christ. Your sins have been paid for. Our sins have been paid for. So show mercy upon those around us, to one another, across the aisle, everywhere.

[26:37] Show mercy because you have been extended great mercy. And for all those times you've been wounded, I'm so sorry. for the time of the church has not been here for you. I'm really sorry.

I really am. I pray for new days ahead, new days submitted to him, new days steeped in his word. Because what happened to you wasn't right. It wasn't.

And I'm really sorry. God has forgiven such a great debt to us that any debt that is owed to us by another person is insignificant by comparison.

No one can offend me to the extent that my sins have offended God. I'll say it again. And this principle has been applied to the little things done to us, but also the great things done to us.

Because forgiving one another isn't easy. There are things that happen to us that can sometimes feel unforgivable. And we want justice.

[27:36] There's things that we have witnessed where we've seen just, it's just wrong. How can I forgive this person? Well, those are good questions. And I'm not trying to say to anyone who has experienced trauma in any way, shape, or form that you should just get over it.

That's the wrong message here. But starting the process of forgiveness, whatever it takes, does not mean reconciliation.

You don't have to have an abuser's face on the lock screen of your phone so you see them every day. Oh, I forgive them. You don't have to do that. You know, my daughter has a pretty good analogy that way of just like, you know, if somebody punches you, right, you can forgive them.

But you might stand a foot or two behind next time so that they don't have a reach. It takes a long time sometimes to build that trust. I think that's actually appropriate here too. Because forgiveness and reconciliation are two different animals.

I don't think you can have reconciliation without forgiveness. But you can't have reconciliation without repentance either. And it's arguably the first word of the gospel is repent.

[28:48] repent. Jesus said it. John the Baptist said it. Even Moses. Repent. Okay? Repent. That means we have to take what's in our heart, that thing we've done, and we have to put it before the Lord and say, I'm sorry.

To you first, whom I have sinned against, I am sorry. First and foremost, I've hurt this person. I've hurt these people. Help me in this apology, Lord. And we can sometimes get caught in wrong thinking with this.

I'm not going to forgive until they say sorry. Because God doesn't forgive us until we repent. But that's wrong thinking. Of course God forgives us.

Do you know I know that? Do you apologize for every sin you've made at the end of the day? I mean, every single one. Are you on your knees before your bed and saying, Lord, I'm confessing my sin?

102 things that I've done today that I don't even know about, I'm confessing them to you. Do we do that? Not likely. Which means our father just looks at it and says, okay, son.

[30:00] Okay, daughter. Let's try again tomorrow. I forgive you. There's forgiveness there. But repentance comes through an activity.

It comes through saying, I'm sorry I did this to you. I don't want to be this person. I don't want to do this again. I need the Lord's help. I need the Holy Spirit and his power to teach me how to live in a new way so I don't keep doing this activity.

And then the person who has been harmed, I forgive you. I can't forget just yet. but I forgive you. Let's figure this out together how to walk this repentance out, this reconciliation. Let's walk this out. There are some people who refuse to ask forgiveness.

Maybe they don't even know that they've done anything wrong. It's not every single thing that we need to bring a witness to or bring something up. Sometimes you forgive and you release.

[31:04] Somebody bumped into me in the hallway and, you know, just kind of made me feel a little put out. I'm just going to, I'm not going to bring it up. I'm still going to let it go. You know, they weren't, they weren't even looking.

This didn't happen, by the way. I'm just, this is all figurative. They weren't even looking. It's not their fault. I'm just going to, I'm not going to hold it against them. That is a healthy Christian attitude of forgiving and releasing.

It really is. It's healthy. And there's lots of things that we can do to release. Lots of things we need to release. But there's other things that we need reconciliation through. And that takes two parties.

One willing to say, I forgive you. And one willing to be forgiven. That recognizes there's something there. But here's the kicker. Because forgiving one another is not easy.

We struggle to forgive. We struggle to release and to be set free. But please hear what Jesus says. Because I'm going to go through, and I'm going to preface this, this is false.

[32:09] Okay? I won't forgive you until you apologize. God doesn't forgive us until we repent. So we naturally think that we shouldn't forgive other people until they repent to us.

This thinking tells us that we have a duty to judge and observe someone else's repentance. repentance. It goes even further. If someone comes to you and says, sorry, it's your duty to judge whether that apology was sincere.

And this reasoning is not right, and it's dangerous. And you know why? Because God has never sinned. He has never needed to be forgiven.

He has no need to ask for forgiveness. forgiveness. I do. Who am I to sit and withhold forgiveness from someone else? Who am I to judge someone?

Who am I to say, I'm sorry, your sorry was not to my liking. It didn't tick off. You didn't have the right emotion when you said, I'm sorry. Who am I to judge?

[33:14] I'm nobody. And I hope by now you're seeing you're not on the throne either. God is. He alone is worthy to judge, not us.

So if we live a life where we recognize how much mercy we've been extended, how much grace we've been extended, how much we've been forgiven, the debt that we have been forgiven, and

then someone bumps into us, our natural reaction is not to kind of take out a book and say, they bumped into me, I hate them.

Right? That's not our job. Our job is to say, Lord, help me to forgive. Help me to understand this person better. Help me to love them.

Help me to pray for them. Father, what words can I use right now that would just pierce their heart in the most loving way? You can pray this for your enemies. Now, that is not easy, but I do believe that's the Jesus way, and it's not easy at all.

we stand as people who have been forgiven and we need continual forgiveness. We do. Just because the Lord has dealt with something in my life, it doesn't mean it's gone.

[34 : 30] I'm dealing with this. The violence that I've had in the past, the excuses I've made, the lies I've told, fill in the blank.

there are still things that I need to forgive myself for. And I had this funny experience where back in the church in Vancouver, and it was a different church, and there was this guy that came in, and he was just talking about God being our justice, you know, and he wanted to kind of take over, and you know, when you get to know me a little well, a little better, you know, that just doesn't fly very well, but my board and I, we talked about it, and I just said, you know, I want to choose to love this guy, because I think he has a calling, and I think he's just frustrated because he doesn't know how to walk it out.

Let me figure it out with him. So I visited with him, and I said, look, why don't we try this? Why don't you shadow me for a month? Okay? Come see what I do. Hang out with me.

Okay? See the outreaches that I go to. Do this kind of thing. See if this is still what you want to do after all that. It's not a rosy job. You may think it's one thing, and maybe I can show you that it's a lot more, and it's different.

And he didn't do that, and he ended up leaving the church. And there was a while there where I thought, well, you know, that kind of stung, and years went by.

[35 : 54] Okay? Now we had moved to another community altogether, and I got this email from this guy, random email, a few years later, and it was one of the most beautifully worded apologies I've ever received.

And it was just like, hey, can I call you? I responded immediately. I said, anytime, here's my number, you know? And he called, and we had this great conversation, and he said, like, I'm just, I'm sorry. I really am.

Whatever I was thinking, I shouldn't have done that, I shouldn't have done this. And I said, hey, hey, it's okay, I forgave you way back then. I haven't thought about this a day since, okay? And I said, so why don't you tell me what the Lord is doing in your life right now?

Tell me how he's encouraging you, fanning that gift into flame, what's going on now? We had a lovely conversation. Now, we didn't talk after that, I mean, we're not buddies, right? But there was peace. So sometimes that justice we feel we need in a situation, the Lord works it out so the timing is perfect.

And it just takes some time to breathe, to heal. Sometimes with the temperature just to lower down a little bit, cooler heads, will prevail. Don't get me wrong, there was a moment where I kind of thought, well, I'm going to put this guy in his place, because that's my flesh.

[37 : 08] But that's not how it worked out. And the Lord did something cool there. I may never speed the guy again this side of heaven. I have no need to reach out to him. We're literally in different countries now. But I know that when I see him in heaven, it'll be like, sweet.

There are some people that we've had wrongs with. We may not see the side of heaven again. But up there, we're not even going to think about anything that happened down here. There'll be nothing but reconciliation and peace, basking in the love of the sun.

What a beautiful thought. So if it were possible, we should be quick to forgive because we stand as forgiven sinners.

We've been forgiven so much, we have no right to withhold forgiveness. forgiveness. And that isn't easy. I'll maybe just before I close, you know, I think about Jonah a bit when it comes to this, the story of Jonah.

God told him to go and deliver his message of salvation to the Ninevites, which were horrible to Jonah's people. Okay? And Jonah's like, I don't want to, and I'm paraphrasing, I don't want to go talk to them because you know what?

[38:19] You're going to forgive them. What's the justice in that? So Jonah does everything he can do to avoid the will of God in his life to the point where he's willing to go to death, to be thrown off the boat into the ocean, swallowed by a fish, spat out onto the beach three days later.

I mean, we know it as a Sunday school, but it's like, man, it is a heavy lesson on forgiveness as well. So he goes to the Ninevites, and guess what? They repented. Everything that Jonah didn't want, that happened because that was God's heart for them, was to bring them home, to bring them back to him, okay?

And then Jonah went and pouted under a tree for a bit, and that's not a good ending to it, but all this to say is that we can be a pouter, a doubter, or we can be a forgiver and be somebody of mercy because sometimes the justice that we want isn't what the Lord wants.

He wants to see someone's heart change, okay? He wants to see them change, and that's better. God forgives more completely and freely than anyone we know.

He works in us by his spirit, and he does require humility and repentance. I mean, five out of the seven churches in the book of Revelation are called to repent.

[39:43] That's an interesting little thing, and I'll just say right now as a tidbit, I am prayerfully considering going through the book of Revelation after this because, oh, baby, is that ever a hot tamale?

It's just fantastic. It really is great. And there's actually, it's one of the only books you're going to find where it says there is a blessing for the teacher and the hearer. And unfortunately, a lot of pastors stop at the letters to the churches because those are sermons written by themselves, right?

You can be a monkey and teach through those first few, and that'd be good because what Jesus says in there, teaching past that and the return of Christ, oof, and that gives me chills thinking about it.

So I'm prayerfully thinking about that because five of the seven churches in the book of Revelation are called to repent, and not all of them were bad churches. Like one of them just simply forgot their first love.

They had gotten so good at theology and looking for bad things and looking for correction and things that they can change, they forgot to love people. And the Lord is saying, look, I see all of this. You're really good at this, but you forgot your first love.

[40:48] You forgot to forgive. You forgot to have mercy. You forgot to love the outcast. Your theology is amazing, but you forgot how to do this. So it's in there.

Reconciliation can only happen when both people agree to it, and this may require repentance on both sides. Reconciliation cannot happen without repentance because you have to give of yourself. And forgiveness is different. If we've been sinned against, the power of forgiveness is in you. You and I can choose to forgive, even if it's hard, even if it doesn't feel 100%.

Lord, I'm still holding on to justice, but I want to forgive. Help me forgive 10% today and 20% tomorrow. Increase it in me, Lord. Help me to forgive. Show me how to.

Give me the faith to forgive. And we pray through that day to day. This parable was given to make us more forgiving, not less, more forgiving.

[41:55] And you can't read this and think that Jesus was trying to restrict forgiveness amongst the disciples, amongst you and me. So I want to leave with this one passage because this is a passage that I prayed over for this church since before I even left Canada.

And it's not because of this church, it's because this is what I pray for every church that I've gone to for many, many years. Okay? Ephesians 4, verse 32. Be kind to one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you.

Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, I pray that you will help us to be tender hearted towards one another. That we will be forgiving for one another.

That we will actually extend mercy, even if we don't feel it. Help us to just extend it a little bit to start with. Change our hearts and break our hearts of the things that break yours.

show us, Lord, how much we've forgiven so that we can so easily forgive those people. Because we have been forgiven much. We can never repay you, Lord.

[43:10] And I'm so thankful that all you want from us is our heart. So help us to turn our hearts over to you today. Do not cling in bitterness or resentment or past hurts.

But rather just to put those at your feet and say, Lord, I don't know what to do with these. They still sting. But I want them to be yours and not mine. And replace that stuff with love and joy, peace and

patience, kindness and self-control and gentleness.
In Jesus' name, Amen.