

True Forgiveness

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[0 : 00] Well, good evening, and it's good to be with you again this evening. We've had a joyful day here in Lewis. We were able to visit the sister congregation in Carloway and to celebrate with them the refurbishment of their building.

And it's great to be back together with you this evening. We're going to begin our time by singing to God's praise. And before we do, I wanted to read some words from the 98th Psalm, which we'll sing in just a moment.

But the psalmist writes, So sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvellous things. His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. Make a joyful noise to the Lord all the earth. Break forth into joyous song and sing praises. Well, let's begin our time together this evening in doing just that, as we sing together the first six verses of the Sing Psalms version of Psalm 98.

We'll sing Psalm 98 to the tune, Gainsborough. O sing a new song to the Lord.

[1 : 11] O sing a new song to the Lord. O sing a new song to the Lord.

O sing a new song, dear the Lord. For what wonders he has done.

His right hand and hand, his holy arm, The victory have won.

The Lord declared his saving word, And made it to be known.

To all the nations of the world, His righteousness is sure.

[2 : 28] His steadfast love and faithfulness, He has remembered well.

The covenant he made with them, The hearts of Israel.

And all the nations of the earth, Have seen what God has done.

Our God who prays deliver us, By his right hand alone.

Acclaim the Lord, O all the earth, Shall loudly and rejoice, Make music and be jubilant, To them with a pure voice.

[4 : 15] With heart make music to the Lord, With heart his praises sing, With trumpet and with all rejoice, Before the Lord again.

Let's continue now in praying to our gracious God and Father. Let us pray together. Gracious God, we do rejoice this night, As we lift up our voices to praise you, As we sing to you a new song. Lord, we remember that you are the king, Over this whole world. Before you the nations are a drop in a bucket, They are as dust in your hand.

For you are the king of kings, And the Lord of lords. We bow our knees before you, Our gracious God, Knowing that you are the one who holds sway Over all the peoples.

And that you are the one who has sent salvation To all lands. That you are saving work. That your righteousness about which we have sung Has been made known to all nations.

[6 : 08] In and through your son. Our savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so this evening we turn our attention to him.

Giving him the love and the praise of our hearts. Recognizing that he is the one by whom, And through whom, And for whom all things were created.

We humble ourselves before the one who stepped down. Who stepped into this world that he had made. And which we had tarnished with our sin and our disobedience.

We thank you that he was willing to go all the way to Calvary's cross. To experience rejection at the hands of men.

To taste death for all. To suffer for us. That we might be redeemed from our sins.

[7 : 12] We might be reconciled to you as our God and as our Father. And that we might one day. Be presented holy and blameless and above reproach before you.

And so we rejoice. As the psalmist rejoiced in your victory. In your mighty works of salvation. In your righteousness.

In your righteousness. We are conscious that one day the world will be judged in righteousness. But this day, this night. The judge comes to us as Lord and Savior.

And he speaks to us once more of your steadfast love. And of your faithfulness. This weekend we are reminded once more of the new covenant made in his blood.

A covenant that promises to us the forgiveness of all of our sins. That promises that our hearts might be filled with your Holy Spirit. And that we might walk in newness of life.

[8 : 16] Gracious God, as we gather tonight. To worship you. To wait on you. To hear what you have to say.

We ask that the peace of Christ might dwell among us. That we might dwell together in peace and unity.

That we might maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace. Grant us, we pray, soft hearts. To forgive one another.

To bear with one another. If there has been any wrong committed against us. Help us to put on compassionate hearts. And to be reminded once more of what we have been forgiven from in Christ.

That we might graciously forgive others. As we have freely received, so might we freely give.

[9 : 17] So we ask you, Lord, help us to walk in newness of life. To live in unity. As brothers and sisters should.

That you might bestow the blessing upon us as individuals. And as a congregation of Christ's people. We ask that that itself would be a witness.

To the wider world who might look in. Who might listen in. And who might themselves learn of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. In whose name we gather.

And in whose name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, last night we thought of true forgiveness.

True faithfulness, I should say. As we studied together in Nehemiah chapter 9. The faithfulness of God to his very often unfaithful people. And this evening, in just a moment, we'll read from Matthew chapter 18.

[10 : 25] And think about true forgiveness. How we, in the gospel, are forgiven all of our sins. They are cast into the very depths of the sea. And how we are therefore to forgive one another.

Before we do, we'll sing a psalm once more. We're going to sing the metrical version of Psalm 133. To the tune Ardros.

A psalm that speaks of the unity of the Lord's people. And how good and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters dwell together in unity.

And so we'll sing together Psalm 133. Behold how good a thing it is and how becoming well together such as brethren are in unity to dwell.

We sing together to the praise of God. We sing together to the praise of God. God bless you. Amen. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you.

[11 : 22] God bless you. And I'm becoming well Together, sons, a threading heart In unity to dwell Like precious coins Led on the head The thumb of fear Did flow He may prosper And to the skirt Let off his garments go

At heaven's dew The dew of the dew On Zion hills descend For hath the blessing God for us Thy path shall never end For hath the blessing For hath the blessing Well I want us to read together now from Matthew chapter 18 and verses 15 down to verse 35 If you have the same version as I do of the church bible it's on page 993 but the verses can be found in Matthew chapter 18 beginning at verse 15 with the heading if your brother sins against you

Let us hear together Let us hear together the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ If your brother sins against you Go and tell him his fault Between you and him alone If he listens to you you have gained your brother 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 and a tax collector Truly I say to you whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven Whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven Again I say to you if two of you agree on anything 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 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? Jesus said to him I do not say to you seven times But seventy times seven Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king Who wished to settle accounts with his servants When he began to settle one was brought to him Who owed him ten thousand 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 So the servant fell on his knees imploring him Have patience with me and I will pay you everything And out of pity for him The master of that servant released him And forgave him the debt But when the same servant went out He found one of his fellow servants Who owed him a hundred denarii And seizing him he began to choke him saying Pay what you owe So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him

[16:04] Have patience with me and I will pay you I will pay you He refused And went and put him in prison Until he should pay the debt When his fellow servants saw what had taken place They were greatly distressed And they went and reported to their master All that had been All that had taken place Then his master summoned him and said to him You wicked servant I forgave you all the 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 to every one of you If you do not forgive your brother from your heart And we thank God for his word to us Before we study together We'll sing once more This time from Sing Psalms

And the 25th Psalm Which we shall sing to the tune Heron Gate Psalm 25 To you O Lord I lift my soul I trust in you continually Do not let me be put to shame Nor let my foes gloat over me We sing We sing In verses 1 to verse 7 We sing In verses 1 to verse 7 To you O Lord I lift my soul I trust in you continually Do not let me be put to shame To you O Lord I lift my soul To you O Lord I lift my soul I trust in you continually I trust in you continually Do not let me be put to shame Do not let me be put to shame Or let my foes gloat over me No one who sets his hope in you

No one who sets his hope in you Will ever suffer such his grace But those who act with treachery Humiliating shame will fail O Lord we feel to me your ways And all your paths Help me to know Direct and guide me in your truth

And stop me ever way to go You are my Savior and my God All day I hope in you alone Remember Lord your love and grace Which from past ages you have shown Do not recall my sins of youth Or my rebellious evil ways

Remember me in your place of For you O Lord I live in your ways For you O Lord I lift you Amen Amen Amen Well let me invite you to keep your Bible open to Matthew 18 As we think tonight together of the subject about which we have just sung True forgiveness it's a joy to be together this weekend to share fellowship to share partnership in the gospel and it's a joy to come together and to worship before almighty God and as we prepare our hearts for the services tomorrow

[21:28] I thought it would be good to think on the subject of forgiveness to reflect on the forgiveness of sins promised through the gospel but also to ask if we need to show forgiveness to any in the fellowship or to seek forgiveness from any in the congregation yesterday evening we thought of true faithfulness Nehemiah chapter 9 we thought of the faithfulness of God who makes and keeps promises the God of great mercy and steadfast love who forgave his people their sins time and again in the Old Testament history and tonight we'll think about the forgiveness we have received if we are in Christ and the forgiveness we need to show one another if we are together in his church and it's a very important word it's a very relevant word because in life we have all kinds of relationships relationships can be a source of great joy and also a source of great sorrow when these relationships break down our hearts can be heavy

I always like to read a kind of history book or biography and the other day I ordered a copy of Paul Allen Idea Man which is a memoir by the co-founder of Microsoft I didn't realise that the history of computer programming was so exciting it's a real page turner and Paul Allen co-founded Microsoft with his childhood friend Bill Gates while they were really just teenagers they worked together for about a decade day and night they worked together they shared a flat but when they turned 30 or so they fell out Paul Allen felt he was mistreated the business partnership effectively ended the personal relationship came to an end though they were later reconciled and it's just one example of a broken relationship such as we see between nations in workplaces in extended families in homes

and sadly and all too often in Christian communities the Christian missionary psychiatrist Marjorie Foyle wrote a book about stress among Christian workers and she said the number one reason Christian missionaries leave the field of service is because of conflict with other missionaries but we don't have to go overseas to find relationship difficulties maybe there are churches where you can say well that's the church I used to go to oh that's the church I never go to because of something that happened something that was said so we might attend a convention such as the Keswick Convention with its great motto all one in Christ Jesus we might read a chapter such as Matthew 18 we might sing Psalm 133 but at the same time there might be someone here tonight that you avoid eye contact with you would not sit next to you perhaps haven't spoken to for years because of something they said or did because of something they didn't say or didn't do that perhaps they should have done and in any gathering of people especially a multicultural multi-generational body such as the

Church of Christ there will be differences of opinion there will be disagreements there may be miscommunication and misunderstanding perhaps somebody said something to you perhaps somebody said something about you perhaps behind your back maybe there was a disagreement in the workplace that has spilled over into the Church there are many many reasons why relationships between brothers and sisters may have been strained or even severed and Matthew 18 addresses this subject concerns the parable of an unforgiving servant there are some parables still well known in our culture still alluded to in the wider society the good Samaritan the prodigal son this parable perhaps less well known but no less important and it has much to say tonight about the subject of Christian unity and I suggest it's very important for two reasons firstly as we've just sung it is good and pleasant when brothers and sisters dwell in unity how it must please our heavenly father when his children get on and love one another and secondly because our witness to the world depends upon it did not the

Lord Jesus himself say that it is by our love for one another that all men shall know that we are his disciples so the pleasure of God the persuasiveness of the gospel depends upon good and loving relationships between Christians so we'll look together at this parable and the verses which precede it and the whole section of this gospel has to do with relationships between disciples chapter 18 verse 1 we see the disciples are having some issues of their own as they come to the Lord and say who's the greatest who's your favorite who's number one in the kingdom of heaven and so the subsequent teaching has to do with our relationships and our responsibilities toward one another we're not to look down on one another the disciples were looking down on each other but we are to look out for one another and to care for one another and to guide one another in the path of life so [28 : 22] I've got two headings two divisions verses 15 to 20 if we are sinned against we must show our brother or sister their fault and verse 21 to 35 we must then show them forgiveness and it may be you think well I find it very easy to show people their faults that's not going to be hard but it's not so easy to show them our forgiveness so we want to think about that now verse 15 to 20 showing them their fault when we are in Christ we are also in his church we are drawn into his community the German theologian and martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote a book called Life Together Together and that could summarize couldn't in our Christian experience we share life together we have responsibilities toward one another and as

Christians we are not only responsible for one another we are actually accountable to one another a few years ago I used to work as a doctor mostly around Glasgow and while training as a doctor you are subject to all kinds of appraisals and one department they had what was called a 360 degree appraisal and effectively they asked different members of staff how you were getting on the nurses your colleagues the doctors the cleaners and they wanted to get a 360 degree portrait whether you were working well relating well to other members of the team and if there were issues you were given a bit of feedback to help you address any issues to help you grow in your workplace people and there's a little bit of a sense of that here that as

Christians we are accountable to one another we are to help one another grow to encourage one another but sometimes perhaps to admonish one another just before this passage we have the parable of the lost sheep and it talks about sheep going astray but then being found again and very often we can go astray in our Christian lives something as simple as church attendance but something perhaps more complex is the state of our hearts whether our hearts are still happy in the Lord and we have a responsibility to encourage one another Paul writing to the church in Galatia says this if somebody is caught in a sin you who are spiritual ought to restore them in a spirit of

gentleness so we're part of Christ's body responsible for and accountable to one another and the question before us verse 15 is what happens if somebody in the church is sinning or particularly sinning against us sinning it may some interpreters take that to mean if we see a brother or sister falling into sin or if it specifically refers to sinning against somebody in the body in the fellowship what are we to do though if we see somebody going astray well what we're not to do is to simply ignore it turn a blind eye sweep it under the carpet hope it'll go away be a fairly apathetic shepherd that didn't care about the sheep just wandering off across the roads and into the fields we're not to gossip about them we're not to hold a grudge against them there are issues interpersonal issues that need to be addressed he says

Christians in the church we come together for comfort to be strengthened when we're suffering and facing trials of many kinds but we must also expect a degree of challenge if we're sinning if we're straying that we'll be called back to Christ the chief shepherd and this isn't something we ought to resent in the workplace it was never particularly comfortable getting feedback sometimes it stung but it was helpful helped to grow helped us to address any problems any issues so too in the Christian life proverbs chapter 9 verse 8 reprove a wise man and he will love you elsewhere in that book we read these words faithful are the wounds of a friend sometimes we need that gentle word of encouragement that word of admonition and in verse 15 we read of the situation where a brother sins against another brother or sister and the

Lord teaches us a sequence in which to address these difficulties verse 15 if they sin against you go and tell them their fault alone so we begin with something which is private and informal and this then progresses to something more public more formal but initially the Lord says if there's an issue don't let the bitter root grow up in your heart go and speak to the one who has sinned against you invite them round take them for a coffee I had one friend that was a student worker working with Christian students and when they were washing the dishes after meals he thought that was always the best time to ask the really difficult questions because you were concentrating on something you weren't looking each other in the face and that was when he really asked you the challenging questions about your

[34 : 55] Christian life and walk verse 16 but if they won't listen take one or two others with you that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses to emphasize the gravity of the situation take two or three others as in the Old Testament there were two or three witnesses and if they refuse to listen to that tell it to the church and if they refuse to listen to the church effectively they are to be put out of the church treated as a Jewish person of that day might have treated a Gentile or a tax collector there is a weight to these words somebody refuses to listen to a friend to a company of their friends to the leadership of the local church there is a weight behind them and that admonition comes with the authority of the

Lord Jesus Christ Paul writing to the church in Corinth 1 Corinthians 5 says that when you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and my spirit is present with the power of the Lord Jesus Christ you are to deliver this man over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh so that his soul may be saved in the day of the Lord likewise verse 19 and 20 Jesus says when two or three are gathered in my name there am I among them a wonderful comforting verse that reminds us of our Emmanuel our God with us Jesus Christ who never leaves us never forsakes us but who is present in the company of his people when discipline is being exercised and effectively we do have here a pattern of what we know as church discipline discipline is one of these words that can have both a positive and negative connotation so in the realm of music or sport we can admire an athlete or a musician we say oh they've got wonderful self discipline they're up at 4am every morning they jog 20 miles they do 3000 press ups

Sir Andy Murray great self discipline but it can have a negative connotation and which of us at school didn't dread being sent to sit outside the head master's office with the fear of what might await us behind the door but church discipline here the discipline of a loving Christian family exhorting and encouraging one another is always intended to lead to repentance to lead to restoration writing to the church again in Corinth Paul speaks about that not allowing somebody to be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow showing compassion and comfort to the one who had sinned and repented to bring them back in to the fellowship this pattern of behavior is a means of restoring the straying sheep of these earlier verses the brother or sister wandering off into far off field bringing them back to the shepherd and so the

Lord says if you see a brother or sister sinning if they've sinned against you perhaps the quiet word is where you should begin if they refuse to listen take some others seek to persuade them seek to win them back but if they dig their heels and if they harden their heart tell it to the church as Christians we are to look out for one another we are to listen to one another this behavior the Lord teaches is not about coercion or control but it is about concern looking out for one another is so and so still coming to the services to the meetings is their life still in good standing with the Lord with their brothers and sisters doesn't mean proactively appointing ourselves a kind of moral policeman but it means being open to reacting to things we might see or hear give you some examples went to carol service once in a different church from my own and there was a man clearly under the influence and he explained that he was a member of the church and I thought well maybe not appropriate behavior as a representative of this congregation visited the home of a friend and his wife and he was very short with his wife very bad tempered somewhat grumpy perhaps I should have said something is everything okay attended a conference well known speaker giving a public talk some of the language some of the illustrations inappropriate for a Christian leader to use all the invitation extended to come to a Sunday service persistently turned down messages unanswered the answer if given always no just little things but little things that might speak to us of something greater something deeper in their lives is there a problem with drink is there a problem in your marriage you're getting carried away with the publicity so the [40 : 59] Lord says if your brother sins against you have a word tell him his fault bring him back listen to him but let him listen to you don't just sweep it under the carpet that seems to be the sense of what's going on here the Lord saying somebody is sinning show them in a spirit of love and gentleness their fault we notice three things by means of application firstly this pattern this process is instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ himself he underlines for his people our responsibility toward one another whether the word informally the privacy of a home whether the process of discipline formally in a more public setting it is the Lord who wants us to be accountable to be open to be transparent with one another and the goal is that we will be one in

Christ people may sin against us maybe even this week somebody has caused you offense unfortunately people do say and do things that are hurtful I'm sure all of us at some point have said or done something inadvertently perhaps such as hurt someone else in the fellowship it can't be avoided on church website in the state the states says oh everybody is welcome to this church but I should warn you the building is filled with sinners people might say or do things that cause offense but as members of a Christian fellowship we are therefore to be willing and open to receive correction to be like the wise man of Proverbs 9 who longs to be made wiser still even if the feedback even if the constructive criticism stings recognizing that it produces a harvest of righteousness takes humility to listen wisdom to discern if there's anything there that needs to be acted upon part of being a

Christian not only being comforted but being challenged by the Lord by his word and sometimes by a loving brother or sister and that's really what church membership is about in part as we approach this season we think about what it means to be a communicant member of a congregation and at one level becoming a member is to say to the leadership of that church that I'm willing to be held accountable for my Christian walk and my Christian witness and I look forward to being prayed for but I'm open to being asked questions about my Christian life I'm open to somebody having a word a private informal word if something comes to their attention that is inconsistent in my conduct or my conversation indeed not joining a church is to say at one level that I don't want anyone to be held accountable to anyone

I don't want anyone to be taking such an interest in my life but the Lord says we have responsibilities toward one another not to look down on one another as the disciples did but to look out for one another and to care for one another and where necessary to restore one another so firstly he says if somebody sins against you show them their fault but then in this parable verse 21 he says if they sin against you of course you must show them your forgiveness and Christian forgiveness when exercised is extremely powerful I was delighted to find a Christian bookshop here just yesterday and we had a great time browsing the books and I saw some books about the work of

God in China in the past century the remarkable growth miraculous growth of the Christian church in China and it reminded me of the story of a Christian leader who had published a book and was getting a certain amount of publicity in the West book sought to glorify God tell of some of his

marvelous works and yet there were those who didn't believe what was written in this book there was one man in particular that began a campaign against the author and he began a website and he somehow influenced other leaders in the Chinese church to disown this man to claim that he was a fraud to drag his name through the dirt and after this had rumbled on for a number of months somebody went to this Chinese leader and they said what is your comment what do you say to this individual and to these other leaders he's turned against you and this brother very graciously responded by saying I have absolutely nothing against these brothers of mine and I look forward to the day when we will embrace one another before the throne of the Lamb he turned the other cheek he forgave his critics and Peter wants to understand more about Christian forgiveness verse 21 how many times must I forgive him seven times now the rabbis of the day taught that if you were sinned against you had to forgive somebody up to three times so Peter is really looking for top marks here seven times

[47 : 14] Lord that's more than twice what the rabbis are teaching but the Lord Jesus raises the bar even higher as high as he can raise it not seven times but seventy times seven seven the number of completeness seventy times seven seventy seven fullness completeness as many times as you are being sinned against total true forgiveness one writer says there's no point burying a hatchet if you're going to put up a marker on the site and so the Lord goes on to tell this parable to emphasize the importance of forgiveness there is a king and he comes to the end of his tax year and he's settling accounts with his servants verse 24 one servant is brought in who owes ten thousand talents if you have the footnote in your bibles I have in this church bible you can scan down and it says a talent was a monetary unit worth about twenty years wages for a labourer so here is a man who somehow and we don't know how has run up extraordinary debts in the service of the king not thousands of pounds or millions of pounds but billions of pounds

Paul Allen was worth I think at his peak something like twenty six billion pounds Microsoft one of the largest companies in the world it is that kind of sum of money this man is in debt and he comes before the king and verse twenty five says he could not pay his master ordered him to be sold with his wife and children and all that he had total ruin the bailiffs coming round the house taking away the jewellery the sentimental items the house itself being repossessed by the bank and then worst of all his wife and children being torn from him and sold off as slaves to try and settle a fraction of the debt total ruin verse twenty six the servant falls on his knees and he cries out have patience have mercy have pity on me and I will pay you everything and verse twenty seven and out of pity for him the master released him and forgave him the debt at extraordinary cost to the master he was willing to forgive this unworthy servant and would that not be cause for great rejoicing as he has back his home as he has back his wife and his children as he has back his life and you think it might be the kind of rejoicing we see earlier in the chapter gathering together friends praising the master who showed him mercy given his life back but on the way home he meets one of his colleagues and this man owes him a hundred denarii a denarii was a day's wage so we're talking here a couple of months salary a matter of a few thousand pounds and instead of telling him the good news about the generous master he seizes him and chokes him and says pay what you owe and the fellow servant falls down and pleads with him and he says the very same words the first servant said to his master have patience with me and I will repay you and you might think he would have patience and in his joy and in his gratitude and in his gladness let the man go but verse 30 he refused and he went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt and when the fellow servants hear about this they're appalled and they go to the master and they tell him what happened and the master is angry righteously angry you wicked servant

I forgave you all that debt billions of pounds because you pleaded with me and should you not have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you he was shown mercy but he refused to show mercy he was forgiven but he refused to forgive others and Jesus warns what his heavenly father will do to everyone if they do not forgive their brother from the heart casting them to the jailers until they should pay all the debt so Peter's answer how often will I forgive my brother Jesus says 70 times 7 whenever your brother asks to be forgiven you will forgive him because you will remember how much you have been forgiven by your master one writer says it is the person who most knows himself liable to fall that will be most likely to overlook any offenses from his fellow man if somebody sins against us if somebody offends us we need to remember how much we in our lives have sinned against a holy God how much we have offended the creator and ruler of all things and then to remember how much he has forgiven us what it cost him not in talents but in the

precious blood of the Lord

Jesus Christ shed at Calvary and we remember how he cancelled all our debts it should make it possible for us to forgive others and to forgive their trespasses as we have trespassed against our father writing to the church in Ephesians the apostle Paul says be kind to one another tender hearted forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you in the sermon of the mount Jesus says if you forgive others their trespasses your heavenly father will forgive you but if you do not forgive one another their trespasses neither will your heavenly father forgive your trespasses we refuse to cancel the debts of others then our debt will remain and so the Lord teaches us to practice forgiveness to show the mercy that we have been shown and that's such a liberating thing it's not an easy thing by any stretch but it frees us from unforgiveness it frees us from bitterness and somebody said bitterness resenting someone it's like drinking a cup of poison and expecting the other person to die it only harms ourselves one writer speaks of the liberation of forgiveness in these words a Christian will find it cheaper to pardon than to resent forgiveness saves us the expense of anger the cost of hatred and the waste of our spirits so the

Lord recognizes there will be great joys in Christian fellowship courage such as we've shared this weekend but there will be difficulties differences and he says we need to be realistic we need to be open transparent we need to be willing to receive correction willing sometimes even to give correction to show one another our faults in a spirit of love but we need also to bear with one another to love one another and to show one another the same forgiveness or something of the same forgiveness which we have been shown by our master who at the ultimate cost to himself sent his son the Lord Jesus Christ into this world in order to free us from our slavery and to forgive us all of our sins he showed us our faults he shows us his forgiveness and he invites us to do the same one to another that we might maintain the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace well we need God's help in order to do that and so we're going to pray once more before we close with the final psalm let us pray the godly in the land for holiness renowned they are the glorious ones in whom all my delight is found gracious

[57 : 58] God our loving heavenly father how good it is to be here to be numbered among your people to know that our names are written in heaven to have been sealed by your holy spirit who guarantees the inheritance that is to come and to take time to think of that great multitude above in which we will one day take our place in the heavenly Jerusalem Lord as we think of the church above that great assembly we rejoice to be part of this church below this congregation thank you that you that you that you have brought us tonight or in the course of our lives into a congregation in which we can grow and bear fruit which you can be strengthened and comforted which we can be prayed for and Lord we thank you that this is all of your grace thank you for the gospel of grace which we have thought on tonight thank you for the grace at work in each of our lives thank you for the visible fruit of that grace the brotherly love that is shown the hospitality shared the generosity encouraged the hearts knit together in love and Lord we ask that in this night and the days to come you would help us to be reminded that we are one body different members of the one body and so to pray for one another so to encourage one another so to serve one another and supremely to love one another and Lord we ask that if difficulties arise in our relationships and our friendships and our fellowship that you would give us grace to bear with one another to forgive one another that even tonight if something is not right in our hearts if there is a root of bitterness growing up that you would help us to root it out and to forgive one another from the heart to leave our gifts at the altar and go and make peace and to seek reconciliation peace and so help us to live in such a way as to maintain the unity of the spirit and the bonds of peace help us to see one another as brothers and sisters in the

Lord help us to forgive one another as you have forgiven us a great debt a great weight of sin casting it into the very depths of the sea Lord thank you that you have taken our sins from us as far as the east is from the west thank you that they are gone forever from us and that we are now righteous in your sight so help us Lord to live righteously to walk humbly to love you and to love and to bear with one another this night and in the days to come for we pray in Jesus name Amen well to end our time together we'll sing the metrical version of

Psalms 130 to the gratitude martyrdom this great psalm of God's salvation the plenteous redemption we find in Christ the forgiveness from all their iniquities but we shall sing together Psalm 130 Lord from the depths to thee I cried my voice Lord do thou hear and to my supplications voice give an attentive ear we sing together to the praise of God Lord from the torch toward thee I and my voice

Lord do Lord, do thou hear unto my suffocation's voice, if thou thou tender here?

Lord, who shall standeth thou, O Lord, to spark in liberty?

But yet with thee forgivenesses, that fear forbids me.

[64 : 23] I wait for God, my soul doth wait, my hope is in his word.

O Lord, may thou, O morning watch, my soul doth wait for the Lord.

I say, Lord, I may not be watch, the morning light to see.

Let Israel, O live the Lord, arm with liberty.

Unplentious redemption is never found within.

[65 : 55] And from all his liberty, Israel shall redeem.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.