

What Is and Is Not Forgiveness?

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So, this morning, as we go to the Word, we will continue blessing the Lord, even our meditation should bless the Lord. Bless the Lord O' my soul!

Prayer:

Yes Lord, we will bless You always whether we feel it or we don't feel it, all that is irrelevant, Lord. Our feelings do not matter when it comes to You, especially; You are worthy, You are worthy, You are worthy to be praised, to be adored, to be blessed, always Lord, always. We just thank You, thank You, we just thank You. This morning as we come to the Word, Lord, speak to us. Your Word is life; Your Word is life to us. We come for life; knowledge, wisdom, understanding, revelation, yes Lord, but all that has to become life for us. Just to move from the head to the heart and consume the inner man till it becomes our life. Thank You, Lord, thank You. Speak to us, in Jesus' name, Amen.

So, we have been looking at—there are certain topics in the Bible which are more important than any other topic and one of the topics we are looking right now is connected with that.

We want the Holy Spirit; we want the various manifestations of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is put up across to us, given to us in symbols because of the way He works in our lives. We shouldn't be satisfied like lot of Pentecostals are just satisfied as they speak in tongues, and they actually sometime exhibit very little of the fruit. So, the gift is one thing, fruit is one thing; the various manifestation of the Holy Spirit is there. And we have been looking at Elijah at Mount Carmel saying the God who answers by fire, He is God. So, we see in the evening when time for sacrifice comes, it all begins; restoration of Israel, restoration of a person. Even the first act of salvation with God or restoration for somebody who has fallen away; all begins with that one step, "Come near Me."

We need to take that step towards God. Sometimes, we don't realize it is easier to take a step on the moon than to take a step towards God because of the barriers we ourselves built in our lives willfully or because of lack of understanding. So, that one step toward God, and the first act He does is, repairing of the altar and that's important. We don't realize the importance of an altar in a person's life. We saw about the people with altars in their lives: Abel, the first man of faith had an altar in his life; Enoch had an altar in his life, that's why he walked with God; Noah had an altar in his life, we see at the end but that's just a model, that means he had a place where he met with God; Abraham had an altar in his life; Isaac had an altar in his life; Jacob had an altar in his life, and you also see the people who did not have altars.

See, altar can be the demonic or divine but altar is a place where God meets a man, where He speaks to a man. So, the altar is important because in the New Covenant, we learn from these Old Covenant truths and we learn the spiritual application. The spiritual application is, offer your bodies—and if you read verse 2, your mind too—as a living sacrifice. The thing is that, you cannot have a sacrifice without an altar, okay, we have to have a place where you meet God; a place, time, it's a spiritual truth. You have to meet with God and that's where you offer and the problem is, you cannot have an Old Testament altar. Old Testament altar—lot of people in the Old Testament had altar but that doesn't mean all the people in Old Testament including the rituals that was going on met God; all those people did not encounter God at the altar. What makes the altar different is—Abraham had an altar where God spoke to him; that's what makes the altar different. We just cannot have an altar which doesn't speak to you because it's very important that the altar speaks to you. Turn with me to *Matthew 23:18-19*, the nature of the altar we are talking:

Matthew 23:18-19

¹⁸ You say too, Whoever swears by the altar is not duty bound; but whoever swears by the offering on the altar, his oath is binding. ¹⁹ You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar which makes the gift sacred?

So, imagine, you and I offer ourselves as a living sacrifice on the altar: what sanctifies the gift, that's ourselves? It's the altar. What makes the offering sacred? It's the altar. How does the altar in the New Covenant make the sacrifice or the gift sacred? Because it speaks, it speaks into our lives and then we make corrections and the Holy Spirit who speaks empowers us to make those corrections and the gift is sanctified or made sacred. Turn with me to another portion, that is, *Matthew 5:23-24*.

Matthew 5:23-24

²³ Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

So, you are bringing a gift to the altar and this is a living altar, it's not a dead altar; it's a living altar and when you come to the altar the Holy Spirit speaks and He tells you, "You know what, there is a misunderstanding between you and your wife; you and your brother," He is talking about relationships, and He says, "Just put that right and come back. You don't have to stop praying, you don't have to give up praying, or praising or anything, but you know, I really want to take your prayer to the Father, I really want to lift your praises up to the Father, I really want to give you the answer for the need in your life, but before that, you know there is something to do."

So, that's what we are talking about. We need to have an altar that speaks and that's what we were looking at on Tuesday, right? See, our salvation begins at the altar—for me, my altar was a hostel room in Marlvanios College in Trivandrum; 11 at the night when I went on my knees and said, "Lord Jesus, forgive me and come into my heart," that place became my altar, that became the place. Okay, and that's where your life begins. Your real life begins by an act of forgiveness. The first thing God does in your life when you encounter God in your life personally, the first thing He does is, He forgives you. That's what happened in Jerusalem; they were all out on the streets, I don't know where they were, from the upper room they came out, I am not exactly sure the location of where it is, but hundred and twenty people stand over there and they were all praying in all tongues and everybody is hearing and then Peter preaches under the anointing of the Holy Spirit and the people cry out, "Master, what do we do?" And Peter says, "Repent and be baptized and you will receive the remission of your sin."

So, salvation begins with an act of forgiveness, you don't realize the importance of forgiveness. Where there is no forgiveness, there is no salvation. At the altar, what we encounter is forgiveness and then it is an ongoing journey of forgiveness. If any man says he is without sin, he makes God a liar. God is going to reveal all our sins, my sins or your sins, it doesn't matter how old we are in the Lord, He is going to reveal everything to us, He will reveal as we go on, that's why He says, "My mercies are new every morning." So, we have to look at the importance of it because this is where believers are stuck and they are not moving forward because these are fundamentals to faith. Even if you don't know so many things, like David says—David is not a smart man like his son Solomon but he finished his race unlike Solomon. You don't have to be smart in the Kingdom of God, you just need to be humble, "Blessed are the smart; they shall go up in the Kingdom," God doesn't say, He says, "The humble." David is humble; Solomon is smart, but we know the ends of both of them. What his father knew in the beginning of his life that 'fear God and obey all His commandments', his son learned only at the end. That's the difference between a smart man and a humble man. He always feared God—if you look at the beginning of his life, he feared God. So, that's what God is talking about.

Psalms 130:4

⁴But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.

It's interesting, right? That's not in the world, in the world it is - "Oh, he may be feared because there is no forgiveness in him." We fear the people who won't forgive us and God is different, "There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared." I mean, He is a just Judge, righteous Judge, a God of wrath, a consuming fire, but there is a forgiveness in Him.

Isaiah 55:7

⁷Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

God says, "Don't change My nature. This is who I Am. I Am a merciful God." There is a day of judgement, after that day of judgement, there is no more judgement and after that we will only experience mercy and grace all through eternity, there will be no punishment after that. Yes, we will be still growing, we will still be in mercy and grace and mercy and grace, and God says, "This is I who I Am."

Luke 6:37

³⁷ "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

That itself is a whole day sermon, okay.

Colossians 3:13

¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

That's the problem. If it was written, "Even as James forgave you," it would have been easy, "Even as Peter forgave you," it would have been easy, but the problem is, "Even as the Christ forgave you," and Christ forgives you completely. So also, you must, okay. Remember the Lord's prayer? "Forgive us our debts as we forgive them those who debt against us, or trespass against us," and then He comes back at 6:14, and 15, because I want to make it very clear, you have to believe us, don't get it wrong there.

Matthew 6:14

¹⁴ For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

¹⁵ But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Now please, get this right, you have to always look at context, you have to read the entire Bible and put it together, otherwise you will run with it and get your entire theology wrong. Now, Jesus is not talking here about salvation. If we are saved only if we have forgiven everybody in life, then I earned my salvation, I am saved by works. *Ephesians 2:8-9* is very clear, "No man will boast before God. You are saved by grace and grace alone." So, what is He talking about? He is talking about that forgiveness that leads to peace, to reconciliation and wholeness in life and lot of people don't understand the difference. There are lot of people who are saved but are tortured in their souls, they are tormented in their souls, they are miserable people, miserable people.

That's what God is talking about: "I will allow the tormentors, I will hand you over to the tormentors until you have paid it all," and most people pay it all at their deathbed. They will say, "Okay, I forgive all." God says, "You could have done it earlier, you didn't have to come to this point. You didn't have to get into your sickbed and every organ is failing; you have got this tube through your nose, now you are ready to forgive. You could have lived long and well, there was no need for this." And that's what God is talking about: torment, they are not able to sleep and they are anxious and worried, they have no friends, they have no real fellowship, they are not able to communicate

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with anybody and if you look at it, it's got to do with something on their mind; minds are messed up, and it's simply because they do not forgive. That's what Jesus is talking about, our daily life.

So, please keep that in mind, okay. If you have repented and asked God for mercy, and the Spirit of God cries within you, "Abba, Father," you are saved. Don't question your salvation, your salvation is a supernatural divine act of God. It has got nothing to do with you or me, it's got to do with God. God looks into our hearts, sees we are real, whatever we know at that point of time, and He saves us and then as we go on, God keeps saving us. So, we are saved, we are being saved, and we will be saved but the sanctification work stops. I am telling you, sanctification work in most people do not stop because they sin, it stops because they don't forgive; everybody sins, but they don't forgive. And that's what God is talking about and you will see people in *Matthew 18:21-22*,

Matthew 18:21-22

²¹ Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" ²² Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

You don't hold resentment, you don't hold it in your heart, you just let go, otherwise, what will happen? You will be tormented at home, at office, at church. Even if you are in church, you are like isolated, you are not able to communicate, fellowship, in your home, in your office. That's what God is talking about. And then what happens? People are angry, bitter, full of resentment. All these things, people don't realize, all these things are offshoot of unforgiveness. If you forgive, one of the best things is; you can have a peaceful life, it's irrelevant what others do to you; you can have a peaceful life, you can avoid most sicknesses.

One of the fundamentals—in everything we should learn the lessons, one of the lessons we still haven't learned from pandemic; six months on, if you look. Look at 81 years old John MacArthur, standing there and preaching without mask and his congregation hardly, anybody wearing a mask and 81, he should be in his closet in his basement like Joe Biden and never coming out. He is not ill, he is not afraid, you need to have faith, you need have facts. Faith; I am under the blood and I am not going to die before my time, 2; I have run my race well, I have lived my life well. There is no disease in my body where I have to fear these things, because I have taken care of my body, I have eaten healthy.

This is one of the fundamental things people forget: God gave us a body and said, "That's My temple, take care of My body," it's not even my body, it's His body, take care of it, eat healthy. And if you look at the two spectrums of people who are dying of COVID: the old, and there are young people who are dying; the young ones who are dying are drug addicts and the old ones who are diagnosed got a lot of complications. So, lot of these complications could have been avoided and one of the major reasons of complications is got to do with unforgiveness, anger, bitterness and resentment and it causes all these diseases and of course, you have to eat well too. You can eat the best food and have a bitter soul and still be sick because everything has the spiritual root. So, when God is telling us something, He is not condemning us. When you go to a doctor, gives you a prescription, you don't look at the doctor as if—there is a joke in Malayalam when a patient went to the doctor and the doctor checked his whole history and the doctor said, "You should not eat eggs, you should not eat meat," he saw the patient's face was getting angrier and angrier and he finally burst out and said, "So, what do you want? You want to eat all my fish and meat?" Doctor is just prescribing you the medicine—God says, "If you eat well, if you take My advice, it's good for you." It doesn't affect God, it affects us; you and me.

So, when Jesus is saying, "It will give you peace." That's what I said: "The Word of God is health to the whole man's body." *Proverbs 4*, Solomon says, "Health to a whole man's body, to walk in forgiveness." Otherwise, you know what? Marriages; that's the closest, home; next closest, church; spiritually the next closest, office; you live with resentment.

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Now, let's come to *Mark 11:24-26*—like tomorrow morning we will have prayer, and we will have so many prayers and we get many prayer requests, okay, we all pray. And why do we pray? Because we have a need. We are not praising, that's a different thing, we praise God, but everyone prays, even the one who does not praise, prays, he prays because he has a need. When Peter was sinking, he didn't say, "Hallelujah," he said, "Lord, help me!" he prayed, okay, he prayed and Jesus didn't give him a lecture, he pulled him out and then gave him a lecture, that is Jesus.

Mark 11:24-26

24 Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

He says, "When you pray, you should believe whatever you are asking, you will receive, you must believe."

Now, again He says like the other one. Now you are bringing your gift to the altar, so at every point, God brings the same issue back to our minds. He says, "This is important to Me." You will say, "God, You don't know my need," God says, "You don't know what is blocking it." So, we have to come to that.

25 "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. 26 But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."

So, if you do not forgive, He doesn't hear the rest of the prayer. Now go to verse 25.

25 "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses."

He doesn't say, "If you pray," it says, "Whenever," "Whenever you pray, if you have anything against anyone..." How will you know? The Spirit will tell you. Don't take that word out, 'Whenever.'

You see, our prayers, if they are real, have to be animated by the Holy Spirit, only He can take our prayers to God. He is the One who searches our heart, He is the One who searches our Father's heart; when He searches the Father's heart, He looks for the will of the Father for us; when He searches our heart, He looks for offense against somebody else, that's how it works. "Whenever you pray," we are not talking about soulish prayer; soulish prayer is only connected with your wants, we are talking about spiritual prayers. When it is spiritual prayers, it focuses on what I really need and the Holy Spirit always will focus on what I really need. What do I really need? You and I need forgiveness first, more than anything else, we need forgiveness first and God says, "I want to forgive you, but do you see the problem is, you see there is something in your heart." That's what Peter is asking, "Seven times?" Jesus says, "No son, not seven times, it has to become your lifestyle."

"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses."

Jesus is not a preacher; He is somebody who lives it out. So even when He is hanging on the cross, He begins with forgiveness and these are His enemies; they are all mocking Him, abusing Him, scorning Him; all these set of people and He begins with that act, "*Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.*" It begins with that, okay. So that's why God has given that parable: *Matthew 18*, last Tuesday. Jesus is talking about—or rather, even in eternity, we will never even in eternity fully fathom how much God has forgiven us, how completely and how totally God has forgiven every sin of ours. Not only forgiven; He paid that agonizing price for it and He says, "You also need to let go," otherwise what will happen? You will be tormented, tortured soul, you will never become whole.

So, today we look a little detail on what is not forgiveness, coz sometimes, people get confused because these are the things you need to know when God is talking to you about something, what is it? Coz we are talking to people who have been abused like no man's business, people who have come through trauma, people who have come through all kind of junk which cannot be even talked about and now, news media will always glorify stuff. One guy

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was shot in—I forgot which place, Jacob Blake was shot seven times; he was paralyzed, he is in the hospital. Over that, suddenly other riots and the media makes Jacob Blake into a saint, but Jacob Blake, what he actually did cannot be even spoken in a public forum, what he actually did was so sick; he was a sexual offender and he was on the police this thing, and the police was called to help out—but the problem is, it doesn't work that way with God. They have made him as if he was a victim, he is not a victim; he was the offender there, of course, I don't understand why you have to shoot somebody seven times, I don't understand that part, maybe it was an automatic, whatever it is, you don't have to shoot somebody seven times, once is enough if you have to shoot. But what I am saying is, don't let the media change the narrative.

We need to understand what is forgiveness and what is not forgiveness. When God says forgive your brother, your sister, or anybody, whatever they have done, it is not acting or pretending that it never happened; that is not forgiving, that is what we call repression, you are repressing it. It will become a wound that never heals, it will fester inside. You are not pretending as if nothing happened, that's not what God is saying, God doesn't play pretense: Mommy, daddy, children play; He doesn't play pretense. You are not pretending something never happened; it was real, you have to face it, it is real. If you repress it as if it never happened, what will happen is, it will be a wound and the problem with the wound is that, a festering wound is that; we know it in our body, a festering wound, a painful wound will immediately define our walk and it doesn't matter what it is, even if it is your small toe; hammer falls on that small toe, then the whole body after that is taking some weight to give some peace to that toe, that's the nature.

So, something terrible has happened to you or was done to you, you have to deal with it. So, forgiving doesn't mean you are pretending that it never happened and the problem is, when you pretend what has happened, especially if it is traumatic, for a child or something, what happens is your soul splits. What the freemasons do is, they do it forcibly, but even otherwise when children go through trauma, that's a coping mechanism God has given to the mind, unable to handle that pressure, that trauma, so they will start pretending and they tell stories of what happened and they create a completely different narrative of what happened because you have split, because you cannot live with it. So, your coping mechanism is, because you are too weak, you break.

God is not telling you to repress and He is not out there to break you, He is there to heal the broken hearted, He puts you together. He is not asking you to repress, okay, He is not asking you to repress. Because you and I can truly forgive only when we have truly admitted something happened to us. How can you forgive somebody when you don't acknowledge that somebody did something to you because you need forgiveness, the wound is there. If you don't really acknowledge it; you cannot forgive, if you don't forgive; you cannot be healed. Look at *Genesis 50:20*,

Genesis 50:20

²⁰ But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

He is not whitewashing it, he is not. He said, "You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good." How could God use it for good? Does all evil that has happened to all men become good for people? No.

We will say, "*All things work together for the good of those who love Christ Jesus and are called according to His purpose.*" Does it happen? No, it happens only to those people who choose to forgive their oppressors, otherwise it will not work for good; that very thing will take you down. That will become your downfall. Please understand! Don't take the verse in isolation and then say it will work for me. No, it doesn't work for you unless you follow the other parts that are attached to it: that's why, don't pick the promises from Bible and say, 'That's my promise'; I am going to name it and claim it. God says: "Name it, claim it, it is still not going to come to pass because you have to live it."

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So, he says, “You meant for evil,” but he forgave their evil. He acknowledged it, he didn’t repress it, he had forgiven right in the beginning, otherwise, God won’t be with an unforgiving man in Potiphar’s household and take him to the top; he is a forgiving man, so God is with him. The first thing is that—please remember, when you have something done against you by somebody, we are talking about somebody, don’t pretend that it never happened, deal with it; it’s a real thing that happened and deal with it and forgive that person. Acknowledge that it happened to you and forgive that person, don’t play pretense, don’t repress it, it will become the festering wound. The faster you choose to forgive; the faster your healing is.

In the old days and all, for wounds we used bandage and these days they say leave it open. Science has changed, right? I remember one of my friends from U.S many years ago, he had a fracture and he send me a picture; I was almost shocked because you could see all that steel thing and all, everything open, then I checked with my brothers and said, “How come it is all...?” and he says, “That’s the way we do things now, it heals very fast.” So, God says, “The faster you open it up, deal with your wound, forgive that person, the faster God can heal you.” Don’t repress it, don’t pretend it.

Second thing: forgiving is not excusing what the other person did. You and I don’t have to make excuses why it was okay for the other person to do it or maybe I should not have worn the coat of multi colors which my father gave me, maybe that is what set them up; don’t make excuses for bad behavior and that’s what is happening in the world, everything is excuse; everything is excuse. That’s what the blue city’s advice in the beginning was, “This is anger, let it burn out.” 101 days, it’s still not burned out and they make excuses. You cannot allow that! Young people looting, “Oh, that’s okay, our forefathers were looted.” No! It doesn’t work, it doesn’t work that way, they are sowing their own destruction by their very act. You have to hear what the secular media; the excuses they make for that behavior. And God says, “Don’t make excuses, don’t make excuses for somebody’s behavior.” Was it okay what they did? No. You are not repressing it, you are not making excuses.

Joseph does not say it was okay what you did, he says, “*You did it for evil but God turned it around for good.*” That’s a different story altogether, okay. It’s not that, “I understand what you are going through,” don’t make excuses, then you are not really helping them—I am telling you; I go through this almost every week with this counsel. “I did because she did it...” and she did because he did. It simply doesn’t work like that. You don’t make excuses, okay. To forgive a sin, you don’t approve a sinful behavior. When you make excuses, you are saying it is okay, it is okay. Just because man is fallen, that doesn’t mean he has to lie on the ground. There are people in the Old Testament who walked with God with the fallen nature, so don’t make excuses.

So, the first thing is stop pretending, don’t pretend it never happened, then you will never address that issue that happened in your life, bring it to the open, deal it with God and it is gone, if it is somebody that has to be dealt with, deal with that person and it is gone.

Second, don’t make excuses for somebody else’s behavior. Especially parents, when your children goof up, don’t make excuses, you are not helping them, I am telling you, you are not helping them at all because we have loads and loads of children coming from broken homes, your parents’ home may be broken but that doesn’t excuse your behavior. Joseph came from the most dysfunctional family; a father with four wives and his mother is dead, his ten brothers are crooks and he walked straight, so don’t make excuses.

A prodigal son’s father did not make excuses and bend backwards to accommodate his son; he said, “You can go.” So be very careful about these things because God does not make excuses. Anyone who looks at the face of Jesus can walk free. He has paid the agonizing price for every sin every man has committed, so don’t make excuses, okay. So, please remember, forgiveness is not pretending that something never happened. Second: it is not making excuses for—what happens is, the other person will not change. Let us say, in the usual, the most difficult relationship on earth is the husband and the wife, most difficult because that’s called to be the most closest—see, it’s easier for Corrie Ten Boom to forgive the guard at the concentration camp who is just a face without a name,

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than for a husband or a wife to forgive the one who sleeps next to him or her. Okay, we look at that incredible act of forgiveness; she met him once, she is never going to see him again but this one is there with you all your life, that's where the struggle is. So, the problem is, sometimes what happens is, we confuse and we tolerate and God says that's not what forgiveness is, you do not approve of sinful behavior. You choose to forgive because God forgave you and you don't have to approve of that sinful behavior.

Third thing to understand: please listen carefully, this is where most believers go wrong and they struggle; they are tormented because if you accept a lie as truth, that very lie which is not truth but accepted as truth will torment you.

Dr. Richard is here, let us say, Sammy got a fever and he gives him two tablets, by mistake Dr. Richard gave him medicine but it was not for fever, it was to clean your stomach out and he took the wrong medicine. Now he is thinking this is true but all he is doing is running to the loo and his fever is not going and lot of people have received a lie as truth and say, "Lord, why am I still tormented though I have forgiven?" listen carefully, this is the most important part of Christian relationship, remember, I am talking to the believers, even if unbelievers take these principles, it works coz these are Kingdom principles.

Forgiving is not reconciliation, forgiving takes only one person, reconciliation takes two persons. God has forgiven all mankind in Christ Jesus but to be reconciled to God, each man personally has to seek His forgiveness and receive it, that's reconciliation. There is not a single man from Adam till the last who has not been forgiven by God, for God sent His Son not to condemn but to save and Jesus when died on the cross, He died for all mankind.

So, forgiveness is connected with one person; reconciliation is connected with two. So to forgive it takes only you and Jesus is hanging on the cross, He is forgiving; reconciliation will take another 50 days and that too only 3000: 120, 11, 120, 3000, slowly going and most people won't get reconciled, that's why I keep saying, "Hell is full of forgiven sinners," never got reconciled with God. When you are talking about forgiveness, you can forgive someone and it doesn't matter what they have done to you, even if they continue to hate you. Are you getting the picture? That's how Joseph lived 13 years, otherwise he would have been a tormented soul as a slave and as a prisoner but he forgave.

So, to forgive it only takes one; to reconcile it takes two. See, let me tell you from my experience as a servant of God, as a Pastor, I have seen all kind of junk happening; family, homes, churches and all; I have seen two people getting divorced and one walking free and the other tormented till the last day and how is it possible that two person in a marriage get divorced and one is walking with God and the other is tormented? Because one chose to forgive and the other refused to forgive. In every marriage where divorce takes place, there is fault on both sides and some times fault is even more on one side, but sometimes you will see—like I keep talking about: David walked away free and Ahithophel didn't.

If you look at *Psalms 51*, David never mentions anybody there, he only mentions himself. He doesn't say, "Why did she have to bathe in the public? Why did she have to expose her nudity? Okay, I called her but she didn't have to come," he doesn't say anything. "What kind of man is Uriah? You have been away from your wife for so long, you should have gone and slept with her, all these chaos wouldn't have happened," not a noise, no excuses for his behavior, not repressing it down also, "Oh, it's all okay, nobody knows, he is dead, she is my wife; everything is okay." No, he is bringing it out, dealing with it, making no excuses for what he said and he says, "I can stand there alone and receive God's forgiveness and I choose to forgive everybody involved in it," and this is something people need to understand.

Forgiveness is not reconciliation. You forgive so that you can reconcile with God, reconciliation with a man is a different matter altogether, with some you may; with some you may not want to be reconciled, may not even

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forgive you at all. One man sought God's forgiveness; another man refused, he heard that and he didn't even bother, he died unforgiven, forgiveness was available for both. So, it doesn't matter what they have done to you, it didn't matter what was done to Joseph because forgiveness is letting go of your resentment, your anger, your hurt, your bitterness what was done to you and you have no control how the other person may respond to you, but you definitely have control how you are going to respond, that is something which we all have. Please! Please! Don't ever make it so difficult, I mean, when this comes to—see, people will say, "I can, I can," when it comes to forgiveness, people will say, "I can't," it's nonsense. You have to sit with people, "No, I can't, I can never forget, I can never forgive," is it true?

Like I said last week: forgiveness is not an act of emotion, it's an act of your will and everybody has a strong will, nobody has a weak will. What we say weak will is a strong will towards evil. Everybody's will is strong, nobody has a weak will and with the will you make that is the main part, "I set before you life and death, blessing and curses, you choose to forgive or not to forgive. Forgive- life, unforgiveness - death, you choose," God says. If we cannot choose, then we have no will. Animals have no will like man, we have will.

I was telling you guys, 1984 is when my timings changed because I went to college, it was shift system. So, I had no class in the afternoon, so, slept in the afternoon, sat up till 1-2 in the morning and woke up late. Imagine 1984 and 2020-how many years? 36 years. When I went to work in a government institution, I had a deal with my boss, my principal, "I will take 6 hours in a row if you let me afternoon to sleep." He said, "Deal, James!" he was looking for somebody who would handle those classes, I said, "I will do that, only thing, can I sleep?" In a government institution where the principal lets you to go to your quarter and go sleep, then you sit through the night and read, read.

And then like 10 days, 15 days back, it was troubling me; *"early in the morning"*, you read all these scriptures and all, and you are not waking up in the morning, then I said, "Lord, I am going to choose to wake up in the morning, I have never done this in my life, except on Sundays to prepare for the Word. Lord, will You please help me to wake up every day before 4! You wake me up and I will get up," and if you have noticed, without stop—only thing is sometimes it is like, yesterday it was 3.18, and today was 2.30 in the morning and then you turn around and sleep for one hour and 3.30 I will wake up. And if you realize, it is not difficult thing: 36 years habit can be stopped in one day and the other thing was, 55 years I was a rice eater—that's my age, and then one day I decided no more rice and for Malayali to say no more rice—because all his life is connected with all those things that are added to rice; that fish curry and those thoran and that yellow curd and at the end, every day for me was Onam: you have to have your curd, and your banana, and your sugar and everything; that is special sugar, jaggery okay, and one day everything is over, I haven't touch rice for two weeks now, it's over and I know it's over unless I am on mission, it's over.

So, you can make a choice, it's not difficult. Then why is forgiveness so difficult? If you can break a 55 years old habit in one day or a 36 years old habit in one day, why is it so difficult? Why do people make it so difficult? Because you are confusing reconciliation with forgiveness. Now please remember, in intimate relationship you need to have reconciliation but in certain cases, reconciliation may take time but you consistently forgive. That's what Jesus is saying, "When you stand praying, if you remember your brother, your sister," you sister is your wife, closest sister is your wife, that's why Abraham married his sister, so that your wife is your closest sister; father of faith, and for the sister, your husband is your closest brother and neighbor. Many couples live like a neighbor.

So, you have no control how they will respond but you have control of how you respond; that's your will. So please don't confuse forgiveness with reconciliation. Forgiveness is the sovereign act of one person. I choose to forgive because I need to move with God. Like I said, you can call it selfish, whatever you want, but that's the sovereign decision you make. So, Joseph chose to forgive his brothers; 21 years before he met them, he had already forgiven them; he chose to forgive Potiphar and his wife because God is with him in the prison; he chose to forgive the butler who forgot about him for 3 years; he chose to forgive everybody,

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they all sinned against him because he had blessed them and they did not even do one good thing back to him. He was a blessing to his father, to his brothers, he was a blessing to Potiphar, he was a blessing to this guy who was released, he was a blessing to everybody, he did not harm anybody, he is the one person in the Bible everybody sinned against and he didn't sin against anybody, but the thing is, he chose to forgive and therefore, he move ahead with God. People don't realize, people are saved; they are not moving ahead with God and it's going to affect their eternity.

It's like sports, you know you will see some players, they start with a bang and they go like Vinod Kambli and if you look at Vinod Kambli and all, one of the fundamental problems is that they will never listen to their coach once they become a star, but you look at the guys who had extended career till the end, they listened because they knew, "I may be the best player in the team but my coach sees my defects which I don't see, he sees because he is trained for that."

And that's what people need to realize, I have to walk with God, salvation is a journey, I have to finish my race and one of the fundamental blocks is not lack of money, it's not lack of education, it's not even sickness in your body, it's none of these things mankind put so much effect on: what to eat, what to drink, it's none of these things, it's not even your enemies, the greatest men in God's Kingdom had uncountable enemies, look at anybody in the Bible who were the greatest in the Bible: Moses, David, Jesus, Paul, they all ended up at the end of the spear, literally, but you look at all four of them, they are unbelievably forgiving, so they finish their race. And God is talking about this thing, don't confuse forgiveness with reconciliation, leave reconciliation to God. God is the God; He is the only Person who can bring two people together. What is that I can do? I cannot pull somebody to me, what I can do is release that person, I choose to forgive the harm he has done to me. It's only God who can change hearts and have peace between Jacob and Laban, "Don't touch My boy. Leave him alone." "Okay. The God of your father appeared to me, I am leaving you alone." It is only God who can bring reconciliation between Jacob and Esau, it's God!

Reconciliation is a work of God, that happens at the Cross where God reconciles the Jew and the Gentiles, all mankind. But what do I do? What is the choice that I have? I can choose to let go, forgive. It doesn't matter how much you were oppressed; we are not talking about reconciliation that way, don't get it wrong, because abused victims are there all around the world, and especially to the people whom we minister, you have been abused like no man's business, right as a child, you have been sexually abused, molested, all these people are there. God is not saying go and shake hands with them, no He is not asking you to do that. God is saying, "Let them go in your hearts, release them." "Lord, I choose to forgive them," and you will move with God.

So, please remember, first: you are not pretending, you are not playing games; it is a fact, it happened to you, you are not regressing it, you are bringing out the wound, opening it up there and allowing it to heal. Okay, you are not pretending, you are not regressing, you are facing it and you choose to forgive that person.

Second: you are not making excuses for what that person did, don't whitewash it. That's what a lot of people do. Especially women, they will stay in very abusive relationships, "Oh, at least when he is sober, he is so kind," they never acknowledge the other side and face it. Don't make excuses. "Oh no my son, he will come back, after all he is a teenager, let him smoke some pot," No! They make excuses and it doesn't work, you don't make excuses. We do not by our actions say that we approve of sinful behavior, we choose to forgive, okay. They prodigal son's father forgave, that's why he received him that way but he never approved of his behavior. Forgiving: the day he left, his father had forgiven, he didn't wait for the son to come, to forgive him, then he would have been angry bitter old man like many old people in Hindi movies, "You will never enter in through this thing, you will never see my face even when I die, I don't want to see your face," No, the prodigal son's father is not like that. "You want to go? Here, before you go, take this cheque also, this is your inheritance you can go but I will forgive you and I will wait for you. I love you and I have forgiven you." He doesn't make excuses.

Forgiveness is not reconciliation. "Okay I was very hurt when you said that but I forgive you. Now please stay. Why do you want to go to that far away country? Stay in my house, whatever you want I will provide it in your room." That's is not reconciliation. That is compromise. That is tolerance. God is not talking about reconciliation as forgiveness. Forgiveness is something which you choose to do.

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Fourth thing: forgiveness doesn't mean that you are giving up on justice. You are not. Are you getting the picture. Let me explain.

Romans 12:19

¹⁹ Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

What is God saying here? When you are forgiving, the problem is that we will try to say, "I want justice." But the problem is that often we are motivated by revenge and vengeance. There is a day of vengeance coming; the day of justice and judgment and after in most of the situations in which we are involved in; which we are talking about it, we do not know how to bring justice. Let me tell you this – no sin will ever go unpunished; either in this life or in the life to come; nothing will go unpunished, that is the nature of God's Law. And even if you think that you have gone unpunished, it is because you have repented and Jesus took your punishment.

There is nothing under the law that is unpunished. So, when you say, "I forgive somebody," you are not giving up on justice. Let's go to *2 Samuel 12:30*, why this is important in relationships.

2 Samuel 12:13

¹³ So David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord."

And Nathan said to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die.

"I have sinned," and Nathan said, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die."

Now look at verse 14,

¹⁴ However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die."

So, he told him, "However, something will happen." Why I am mentioning this is; murder, rape, theft, all kinds of violence; violence to the person, or violence to somebody's property, or violence to somebody's name, different kinds of violence is there: person, name, property. The victim can choose to forgive but the Law will take its own course, you have no handle over that. The Law will take its own course, sometimes the victims are caught when they are leaving and if they escape the clutches of the Law here, they will be caught on the clutches of Law on the other side. It is better they get caught on the clutches of the law here; people who are never caught will say, "I am smart," you are not smart, you are a fool, because if you were cut and put into prison, maybe you would have repented and encountered God, but because you are never caught, you are caught on the other side and there is only judgement and it is solitary confinement and unending fire with worms added.

When you are talking about forgiveness, you are not giving up on justice, especially in the home, when you forgive your children, that doesn't mean you don't discipline them. You forgive your children for this thing—let us say, a teenager did something directly against what you said, and then comes and says, "I am sorry," and you say, "Forgiven, but no pocket money for one month." "No, that's not fair," "I forgave you, but you have to learn a principle, a discipline every action has its consequences, you are forgiven and I want you to learn the lesson that you don't go to this route again." like I said, David learned his lesson in that particular area where he used to fall and he never went in that area again. So, he needed one good solid spanking, he learned his lesson. Was he forgiven? Yes, he was forgiven and God is treating David as a son, "whomever He accepts as a son, He disciplines." He didn't discipline Saul, he also said the words, "I have sinned," but he was justifying, making excuses for his behavior, "Because of the people," if he had just said, "I have sinned, I am responsible." that's not what he said, he made excuses. So be very careful that you don't make excuses.

Husband is violent with his wife, "I am sorry honey, Lord forgive me." You don't say, "You provoked me," that's not the issue here; maybe she provoked you, but that's not the issue here. Her provocation and you becoming

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physically violent are two different things. They provoked Jesus and He blessed them back, He didn't retaliate. Forgiveness in relationships doesn't mean that you are giving up on justice, then behavior doesn't change. You have forgiven the person but the problem is, 'I cannot trust you until your behavior has changed.'

People will talk about the prodigal son, "Oh, but look at him how he came back," did the father forgive him? Yes. Did the father give him the best coat? Yes. Did he put shoes on his feet? Yes. Did he give him a ring? Yes. And what did he tell the elder son? "All that I have is yours." Usually when a father divides his property when he is living, he divides it in three portions, that's how it is done. Even when he is gone, one portion stays with the mother so that she is not disinherited and when she dies, she gives it to whichever one she wants to. The father's property has to be divided equally between the children and the mother, that's the law. The mother can give it to anybody she wants, the children cannot claim the mother's property according to the law; they can claim the father's property. That's how they do. It says that he divided it between the two; if you look at it logically, divided meaning, two thirds of it he divided it and he had a property but he is telling the son: "He's lost, he blew it away; you haven't blown it away, so this belongs to you but I am upset with you elder brother because you are the elder brother; I am giving you the double portion so that you will take care of the younger one, instead, you are not even getting in here." There is so many things involved over there, we will not get into that.

So, please remember, forgiveness doesn't mean you negate justice. He is forgiven but justice also comes. Now we will not be punished for our sins in eternity, but what we sow, consequences will follow and when does it stop? As soon as you have learned your lesson, it stops; it may stop in your personal life, but it will go on to your subsequent generations where they have to make their choice, so understand that. The reason is, don't be emotional about this, "Oh, I have forgiven," you have forgiven, leave it, let God's Law take its own course, your job is to forgive. If you are a victim of Jeffrey Epstein; forgive, he may be dead and gone; forgive his madam, Maxwell; forgive all of them. They picked you up as a teenager, or a child and used you, forgive them and let the law do what it has to do. If the law calls you as a witness, be honest at the stand but you have to forgive them, you cannot be a hostile hostage with anger, vengeance; no, you may get justice at the court but you won't get justice there, you will be miserable there. These are the fundamentals you have to understand.

Fifth one: when it comes to man, unlike God, forgiving is not forgetting, it's something only God can. God says, "I will remember your sin no more," we can ask God the grace to forget, so that we can forget and God will give you the grace. When you counsel people, don't say, "If you forgive, you must forget also," but you are not God. What we teach them is how to handle these memories without it hurting you, okay, you have memories, you cannot do anything about it coz that's the way God created us. God is the only One who says, "I will remember your sin no more" and when He says He doesn't remember, does He remember or does He not remember? If He doesn't remember what He heard, then is He God? So, we don't get into all that. But we have to handle these things. Don't confuse forgiving with forgetting.

The difference is, forgetting is one thing; meditating and rehearsing is another thing. "Lord give me the grace to forgive." Remember the old joke I used to tell you? Two men were discussing their wives; one said, "I don't know how to have a discussion with my wife, if I try to talk anything that upsets me, she gets hysterical," the other man said, "Your wife only gets hysterical, my wife gets historical. Every thing from the day we started dating, she remembers." Forgetting and meditating are both connected with the mind.

Why am I telling you is that—like I tell, when you sit with couples for counselling, and you realize where the issue comes; the issue comes is with is forgiveness, it's not with anything that happened with—see, nobody can do anything more than what humanity has done to each other, though you may think mine is too big, it's normal. As sparks goes up, man is born to trouble, okay. When you get married, double trouble; trouble has multiplied. So, it's not something big, this is there in every marriage but the problem is with forgiveness, and the forgetting part. With some couples, if you notice, they start fighting right in front of the pastor also and you will see one or the other or

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both, they remember every detail from 1980, 1981: December you did this, 1989 you did this, and I am looking at them... and that's the problem, you have been meditating on the wrongs that has been done to you. Though you say, "I forgive," you are meditating on the wrongs and you know what, you are never healed. So, what is happening is, the wrongs are only getting piled up, piled up and one day, the marriage breaks. They are very good at recitation; they can recite a person's wrongs and sins.

I still remember a case: a spouse after 12 or 13 years of marriage, is talking about the first year of the marriage and you know what was that? "When you were hanging that frame in our new house, I wanted to hang it this way and you didn't allow me," and this was a divorced couple, the marriage ended up in divorce. And the other spouse is saying, "Oh, I didn't even realize you were upset with that." They have no clue. People talk about Elephants having great memory, you have to see married couples' memory. Parents; children have grown up, or gone abroad, and they have a whole list, it's called the book of sacrifices: I did this sacrifice this year, this year, this year, now. Imagine God's book of sacrifice if He were to remind us.

1 Corinthians 13:5

⁵ Love is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it's not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs."

I like that translation. Love is not like Mark Antony's speech: "The good that people do is oft interred with their bones, but the evil lives after them."

Any relationship can break under the sun, but you can walk out or move ahead with a conscience that is clean, if you choose not to keep a record.

"it suffers long, but it keeps no record," it keeps no record of wrongs, no record of wrongs. Now it does not mean you do not point out a pattern, so that the person can change, now that's not offending that person. Especially, wherever God has given you authority to judge a man; husband to his wife; parents to children, you are not keeping the record of the wrongs. Like, today morning, I was upset and I told my wife, "Why is that when you come downstairs you don't bring your phone down because I call you, and I call you, and you don't pick my calls and you walk up and down the stairs 3,4 times, and your knees hurt and then I call and I panic because I can't call on the landline coz my mother will wake up."

So, am I being nasty? Am I keeping the records of the wrongs? No, because this is a pattern, change your pattern; bring one phone down with you. Now, am I becoming historical? No, I am not becoming historical. So, please you have to very clear when we say certain things—we learn from history too, so with our children, we look at them and we see a pattern and then we say, "this is a pattern in you," now we are not keeping a record of wrongs because we are offended. It's like the law system, they have a record and the judge looks at them and says, "There is a pattern, there is a pattern over here." So, that's a different record, you are not angry, the whole idea is to save them.

That's what the Bible says: the husband is the savior of the wife; parents act as a savior to their children, they save them from perdition, save them from a life of indiscipline. You may think I am picking on you, but I know, as you grow, there will come a time in your life where you will realize, "I wish I had order, I wish I had order," coz the time will come when you will realize you are growing older, your body doesn't cooperate, you have only a certain amount of time to finish your race and that is when order will become so important in life but then you realize, "Oh, I wish I had listen to my father, he also told; I wish I had listen to my mother; I wish I had listen to my Pastor, they all pointed to one thing, you need to have order." And it's very difficult to walk on order when you are very late. Now we are talking about different, but we are not talking about that here.

Love doesn't keep a record of wrongs, it doesn't. So, when you are forgiving somebody—Joseph forgave, he forgave, he didn't say, "From the well I heard your voice; you said this, you said that," nothing, nothing, he is not

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keeping any record. So please understand the difference because what happens is; if you keep record of wrongs with the wrong motive because you are hurt, you are offended, resent, what happens is, your mind becomes a garbage bin; you are collecting other people's garbage and what it does to you is that; it makes you in God's Kingdom dysfunctional. Lot of people become dysfunctional because they have been hurt by so many people and now, they don't do anything for anybody.

So, God says, "Don't keep it; this man hurt you? Forget, forgive and leave it alone and next one hurts you, forgive," because every person who is coming to you; I am sending to you is a new person. Don't take this record of wrongs and take it out on this one; you will get it wrong and that person sometimes even doesn't know what is happening. In so many marriages that is what happens and that's one of the things when we do premarital counselling; one of the questions we ask is, "Are you really ready to get married or are you bringing your baggage into the marriage, your excess baggage?" because sometimes, you will look at the husband or the wife, may be completely innocent or ignorant of the baggage you are bringing and anything he says, or she says, you are reacting because of that baggage because of something, somebody else did to you. While, this person is completely innocent; he has no clue or she has no clue why is he behaving like this.

We need to realize these things are important in eternity, where will we end up in eternity. Like I said: one of the fundamental issues people have is the abusive patriarchs. Patriarchy is from God, but there is so much abuse in patriarchy, and because of abuse in patriarchy, there is this entire set of women who don't trust men and that has become the block for them to receive the love of the Father; that is the restoration. What is restoration? Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, has to take every soul: men, women, child, wounded, abused, to the Father; it is the Father who heals you. That is the final work of Elijah; he will bring the children to the Father and the Father is the One who heals you, but when the Father-figure itself is messed up, and the devil messes up things, and you look at things with that frame; you look at God as your enemy and God is not your enemy, He is your Friend.

So, we have to look at all these pictures about how important forgiveness is and what God is talking about forgiving. Like I said, forgiveness is, first and foremost, an act of will and it is a choice of life; forgiveness is the first act of life you make: "Father, forgive me." "Lord, I choose to forgive." God said, "I set before you life and death, choose." Second thing which you need to understand very clearly,

Matthew 6:6

⁶ But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

Mark 11:25

²⁵ "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

So, two things are put together: when you pray, where do you go? Into your room. Meaning: when you forgive somebody for something somebody has done to you, it's between you and God. Often, people make the mistake because the other person may not have an idea, he or she offended you and you don't need to go to that person. People don't understand Scripture and how relationships are framed. Let us say, Sammy did something and Sammy has no clue that I got upset, so I go to Sammy and say, "Sammy, I am very sorry, I was very upset with you yesterday." Now there was no need to say that because he has no clue at all, so I go to God say, "Lord, I am so sorry that I got offended by Sammy," it's over. But instead, I go to Sammy, "Sammy, I was very upset with you yesterday, so forgive me," and now Sammy is thinking, "I wonder how many times did I offend him?" Now, every time I look at him, he is like, "Is he offended, is he upset with me?" lot of times, you don't have to go to the other person because the other person may not. When Jesus said, "When you bring gift to the altar and you know the other person has something against you," it's a different thing. You know you had a fight and you left your home upset;

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you fought with your wife and you went to office and afternoon lunch time, you have office Bible Study, and that day lottery falls on you, "Please take Bible Study," and you have to pray, and God says, "How did you leave your house?" so, that's when you say: "Give me two minutes," you go out, call your wife and say, "Honey I am sorry."

Now, that's a different case and this is a different case, don't confuse these things. Lot of people make a mess because they don't understand the way of reconciliation, okay. Lot of times people have no clue, you know, but they have no clue at all. Let's think of a simple example: Sammy is driving on the road and somebody cuts across, and he shouts at that fellow and he goes. Little later he is upset, "Oh Lord, I shouldn't have said that." Now he is going to the traffic police station, "Sir, at this time I was going this way; this vehicle went, can you please find out the license plate number because I have to meet that person and say sorry." Think about it! That's how people do stuff, they go the extreme legalistic way. God is not talking about that; the other fellow has forgotten; he is not even bothered. This is how devil messes you up, he takes you into the way of legalism. God give you one law; Pharisees will make 300 sub sections.

God said, "When you get into your room, shut the door and if you have anything against somebody, forgive," that's all, it's over. And how do you know? Because the Spirit of God will remind you. That's how you do it. Imagine, otherwise the kind of mess you land up? Lot of people have done it and I have said, "Honey, why did you have to do it?" "No, you know what, I was very upset with my team manager, so Monday I went to the office and told, 'Sir, I was very upset with you, I was very angry with you,' after that manager doesn't talk to me at all." What was the need? Manager said something; you were offended but you didn't show anything, now you are becoming a very devout Christian and you are realizing, "Oh, I was very angry in my heart with the manager, tomorrow I need to go and tell him, 'Sir, I am so sorry because in my heart I carried lot of offense.'" God says, "Don't do all that kind of nonsense, you just come to Me and clear it with Me." People do all these kinds of nonsensical things and they don't realize why they are messed up. So, please understand the pattern; this is how it works, this is how forgiveness works, it's an act of will.

Second: when you enter into your secret place, shut the door and it's between you and God because most of the time, the other person doesn't even know. Sometimes, even your spouse doesn't know that you are offended with that person; especially my wife, she doesn't even know whether I am upset or not: she walks in these clouds praising and worshipping God and praying; she doesn't even know if I am offended; she doesn't even know. Five minutes later, mine is also forgotten and we have no record—yesterday's record we cannot remember, forget about one year back or two years back, there is no record. But, on the other hand, if you keep saying, "I was offended, I was offended," then you will think, "I have an offensive husband, he seems to be offended by everything." The problem is, you become the kind of person to whom nobody can come and communicate because around you people have to walk on eggshells because you are very offended by everything. So God says, "Just let go."

This is the healing process and I am talking to all my children around India, especially New York, all if you were abused; physically abused, sexually abused, emotionally abused, verbally abused; all of you want to get married, see that you are healed before you get married, otherwise you will take it to the marriage. God may give you the nicest, kindest guy or lady, but you are never able to receive their love because you have a wounded soul inside, so anything that person says; you react that way and that person has no idea why are you reacting that way and he is not your oppressor, he is the person God has sent you to redeem you. He is not your oppressor; he is the person who will save you from yourself and he is the hands of God who will heal your wounds and you have to be very careful about it. That's what God is taking about.

People don't realize, most issues in life can be settled between God and you, if you doubt about it look at the life of Joseph; he settled all his issues with God and him; issues with his father; his issues with ten brothers; his issues with Potiphar and his wife; his issue with the guy who forgot him in the prison, his interpretation; he dealt

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everything with God. Because he dealt with God and his conscience was clean, his soul was not wounded; he could be a blessing to his father, to his brothers, he could be a blessing to the prisoner, he could be a blessing to Egypt, and a blessing to all nations who came to Egypt; therefore, Pharaoh said, “Anybody can go to Joseph.” The question is; can God send people to you? God is the one who sends people, but can He send them to you? Can He send people to you? The question God is asking and that’s what we have to look at, that’s our actual ministry that we are a blessing and the only way you can be blessing is, you choose to forgive.

Third rule is: tell it to others if you think they need to hear it. Tell it to the other person you have forgiven them, only if they need to hear it. Sometimes, people need to hear it and God will tell you, right? Jacob needed to hear, “You are forgiven, and your destiny will change starting today. No longer you will be Jacob; running, deceiving, running, deceiving, you are Israel, you need to hear it.” You know, a man is brought down, he needs to hear it. Jesus can say, “Pick up your mat and walk, but He knows he needs to hear something else, “Pick up your mat and walk, your body is whole; your sins are forgiven, you are whole.”

Sometimes, people need to hear, okay, let God tell you that you are forgiven. But sometimes, people don’t have to know. So, it’s not that every time you don’t have to—there will be times when God will tell you how you need to deal situations; that is the discernment the Holy Spirit gives and God goes beyond the body; He goes to make you whole, that’s the whole idea. So, Jesus finish the sermon on the mount and when He comes down the mountain, a leper comes and say, “Master, if You are willing, You can make me clean.” What did Jesus have to say? “You are clean, you go, show the priest.” That’s all He has to say, right? But He doesn’t say that, you know what He did? He touched him and said, “Go, you are healed, you are clean.” Why did He touch him? Because nobody has touched him for years. Let us imagine, he became a leper after he got married and then he is out of his home, out of his family, out of his community; all he has known is lepers for the past, say, 20 years; nobody has touched him. The first thing he needs for the body is cleansing, but the first thing he needs for his soul is somebody who is not leprous to touch him: “I accept you; I receive you.”

And that’s our God; that’s our God, and you will see this consistently with Jesus Christ: you will see He will go to affirm somebody—Samaritan woman; 5 husbands, sixth one is a boyfriend living, He goes there. Why does He have to wait there? To affirm okay, “I haven’t rejected you, I understand you, you got this pattern; you are a wounded person. You know what, you are drinking from Jacob’s well. I like something about you; the fact that you have not given up, still looking for love; given up on the institution of marriage but you haven’t given up on love, I like that. You are still looking for a relationship, I will tell you, it’s only one relationship that will make you whole; that’s your relationship with me, after that you will have a wholesome relationship.” Anybody who is not made whole by God, cannot have a wholesome relationship, so the seventh one has come to meet you, and He will not condemn you but He will point out. He is not keeping a record of wrongs; He knows your wrongs. He is not bringing out the record of wrongs to condemn you, no, He is bringing the record of wrong so that you will know this is who you are; this is what made you and now you will take it away and make you whole. From now onwards, you will not go and talk about what the first husband did, you will not talk about what the second husband did, you will not talk about what the third husband did, you will not talk about what the fourth husband did, you will not talk about what the fifth husband did, you will not talk about what the sixth boyfriend did; you will go and talk about Me who set you free, that’s what will happen and you are trying to put it together.

The rule is – you don’t have to tell; it is between you and God. But sometimes you have to tell. If it is between you and God, then its between you and God. But if God says that you have to go and tell the other person, then you need to tell. Sometimes you need to tell the other person, “I have forgiven you.” I am telling you, especially in marriages where they are fighting, to save marriages, especially where one partner has been unfaithful and you are trying to put the marriage together, The one who was unfaithful needs to hear, “You are forgiven,” otherwise, reconciliation won’t take place. That person, whoever it was has to hear, “You are forgiven.”

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I am strange, okay—when I have couples sitting with me and when I hear this kind of stuff and people online and different places, let us say, a person comes; a wife, or a man, or a woman comes, and they come and tell me, “Pastor, I have to tell you what happened; I had an affair.” I said, ‘Is it over?’ “It’s over?” ‘it’s done?’ “It’s done, so what do I have to do?” I said, ‘Have you made peace with God?’ “Yes, should I tell my husband or my wife?” I said, “First, tell me about your husband or tell me about your wife.” The reason is, ideally, if your husband is a very spiritually mature person who can handle it, you should tell but if he cannot handle it, your marriage is over. If your wife is spiritually strong, mature person, if she can handle it, okay, but if she cannot handle it, your marriage is over. So, don’t jump the gun, wait. “Have you put it right with God?” ‘Yes.’ “Is it over?” ‘Yes, it is.’ “Will you ever go back?” ‘No.’ “You want to reconcile with your wife?” Okay, then go with God first, coz lot of counselors will say: “No, you have to go and tell him,” two weeks later, they will file for divorce, it’s over. You have to be very wise how you handle people, because a lot of people cannot handle pressure, cannot handle these kinds of things. So, you have to be very careful of what you say, it’s not a large frame; read Scripture very carefully about how things happen, read very carefully because the whole idea is to bring reconciliation. With God everything has to be open, plain, and spoken.

Even in cases where unfaithfulness has taken place, where reconciliation has taken place and then—two situations: one is; when two people got married and maybe the man or the woman, before they got married had boyfriends and girlfriends, or unfaithfulness took place. One of the fundamental things which I tell them when I am counselling is this: don’t go into details, you don’t want to know the details, it doesn’t help you. “Where did you go with him? Which hotel did you go? Which room? What happened?” You don’t want to know it, it is not going to help you, it will just torment you. Just blanket forgiveness, “I don’t want to know.” When we do marital counselling, I said: when you get married, when you go on your honeymoon, don’t say, “Tell me about all your girlfriends, how close were you, when did you start?” “I don’t want to know, I don’t even want to know whether you had a girlfriend, I don’t want to know whether you had a boyfriend, I don’t want to know.” Don’t short circuit your marriage relationship right at the beginning before it starts. You don’t want to know, none of these things help you. “No, we have to be open,” no, this is not open, there is nothing open about these things. Have you put it right with God? ‘Yes.’ Is it over? ‘Yes.’ If it is over, it’s over. What God has forgotten, why are you reminding? Why are you bringing it all up? How is it going to help this person?

And lot of people have messed their life because they don’t understand fundamental. You are not covering, you have uncovered everything before God, then you are going as God’s Spirit is leading you. Now, other person is not becoming a help, it’s becoming a stumbling block; on the other hand, the other person can be a help. I know a case where this guy was in prison and when he was in prison, he was raped and he became a gay, after he was raped, he became a gay and he started liking the gay lifestyle though he was straight when he was outside. After 3 years when he is released, he meets this woman and that other part of him is still there; he falls in love with this woman but when it comes to the sexual part, he realizes: I am attracted to this side and then when he was counselled, the counsellor says, “You need to be upfront with the woman and tell her—you love her?” ‘Yes, I love her but I cannot marry her. I want to marry her but I am scared to marry her because of this side.’ He said, “How is she?” He says, ‘she is a very strong godly woman.’ “Tell her.” And once he told her, she helped his recovery. You meet people like that who will help you to come out of lifestyle but then that person should be strong enough to carry out your burden, some people are not.

That’s why I said, David had all these wives, the whole list is there, plus concubines and then there is Bathsheba; starting with Michal, all the way to Bathsheba. Who was the strongest? Bathsheba, she was the strongest. What the devil meant for harm; God turns it around for good. Bathsheba was the real wife he had, she covers her son from all the weakness of the father, never mentions what David did. If there was one wife who should have been really offended with David, it should have been Bathsheba, but she never mentions David. How do you know? Because of the honor in which Solomon regards his father, “My father, my father, my father.” On the other hand, if she had been weak woman and told her son about all the junk his father had done, Solomon would have been a

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mess; there would have been no temple. We need to understand these things. So, Bathsheba realizes: yes, he harmed me, he did all this to me, but you know; it dies with me, it will not go beyond my lips, nobody will know the details of what happened, if it goes out from David; that's his problem, it's not going out from me, not even my children are going to hear anything about their father.

And we have to look at relationships that way and when you hear today's message, you realize you goofed up in all this, go back to God and say, "Lord, I goofed up, I messed up, put me right," and God says, 'you are forgiven,' and then start fresh. That's why we realize the more we know the truth; the more we realize how much we need forgiveness.

Fourth thing: you have to speak it out with God. The fact that you need forgiveness, the fact you forgive somebody who is renting space in your head, you have to speak it out, "Father, in the name of Jesus I choose to forgive so and so," hold is gone. Then when the devil reminds, you have to say I have already forgiven; speak it out, you have to speak it out; you cannot meditate in your mind, you have to speak it out because life and death is in the power of tongue, "I set before you life and death," God does it. How do we choose? With our words we choose, we choose to forgive, or choose not to forgive with our tongue. When you say, "I will never forgive," that also you spoke it out. So, when you say I forgive, you have to speak it out. So, step 1 is: forgive, you have to forgive. It's not an emotion, it's an act of will and it starts at Jerusalem; husband, wife, home.

Step 2:

Matthew 5:44

⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

Don't think about Hitler and all that, just think about your own home, this is where it all happens; home, church, office; we don't go into international, national sphere because they don't even know you, but you know the one who irritates you every day, upset with you every day, you are angry with every day. So, God says over there, first thing: forgive, second thing you need to do is, bless them, before you bless them, pray for them.

There is a song, interesting song, it's a really funny song, okay, it's there on the internet; very old song. The words of that song is very funny: "I pray for you that when you go downhill, your brakes fail," "Pray for your enemies, that's what I am praying." God is not saying pray like that. The final line of the song is, "I pray that you pass out drunk with your best friend and wake up with his or her tattoos," that's not what God is talking about. He says, just pray. We don't understand God's mind and God's heart but we don't have to understand; just believe and obey. See the ones who trouble us most are the ones who rent our thought space, the ones who have offended us and the offense we carry.

So, to heal us, God says, first forgive. Second: pray for them. Now, why should I pray for my enemies? For your sake, for your sake pray for them and after that, bless them and don't curse them. Forgive them, pray for them, bless them, coz these are the people or person who is tormenting you most and the way out of torment is, this is what you do; forgive them, pray for them, bless them. Why? Because when you forgive, when you pray, when you bless, what do you do? You set the prisoner free. Who is the prisoner? You. Not the other person, the other person probably has no idea, you are the prisoner.

Like usual saying, "Unforgiveness is a poison you drink to kill somebody." So, when you forgive, when you pray, when you bless; you are set free and Joseph was the most free man in Egypt. I believe, he forgave his brothers, he prayed for his brothers, and he said, "Father, bless them, bless them Lord." God said, "Okay, I will bless them, but you know Joseph, I am looking around all the ones; there is nobody who blesses, you are the only one who blesses, so, I will send them to you, you bless them." So, he said, "Don't take their money, put their money back in the sack, give it all free." He blessed them and when he spoke to them, he spoke kindly to them, and he said, "The best place

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in Egypt is Goshen, I will give you Goshen, you will stay safe and secure,” and he sent carts and carts to bring his father, brothers, and his entire household and settled down. He blessed them.

“Lord, make me a blessing,” first start with your lips. “You want to really be a blessing? Start in your prayer life, start blessing with your words and I will make you a blessing.” It didn’t begin when he was on the throne of Egypt; it happened when he was a slave, he was praying and blessing them, so that when he actually had the power to do it, he became what he always prayed. The problem is, we never become what we are meant to become even when we have the power, because that was never our prayer life when we didn’t have the power. What is that we have the power to be now? To pray. That is something that nobody can do. Jesus was filled with the Holy Ghost and power and He went out doing good and healing everybody, but when they took it all off and nailed Him on the cross, He still prayed for them, “Father, forgive them.”

And God says, “This is the way,” there is no other way to healing, whether it is a personal life, in a marriage, in a home, in a church, in the office; there is no other way. Even for a nation to be healed, there is no other way. If America has to be healed of racial cast tension; simple, forgive, forgive each other, there is no other way. You can’t point out to the white man’s fault, or the black man’s fault, it simply won’t work, you have to forgive. And the thing is that, when you are free, you will also realize, your prayers are answered. When you stand to pray, you are in the secret place, when you stand to pray, what do you want? You want an answer. To have an answer, you need to have a clear conscience, otherwise, you will not get an answer. You look at two people in the Bible: one is King Saul; one is David. David always gets answers for his prayers, “Abiathar, bring the ephod,” immediately answered. “This man has goofed up for 16 months and he asked and you answered him, I walked right 16 months and you never answer my prayers. Why Lord?” because he is forgiving and you are not. He is forgiven, but,” He said, “Look at his dealing with his enemy, Saul. He has forgiven him from his heart, will not do anything against him even when he has the power to kill, he uses the power to bless him. Therefore, when he cries, I will answer him, I will answer him.”

That’s what God is talking about. You look at David’s life, David always got answer for his prayers, even after he has goofed up with Bathsheba, “I have sinned against you,” God said, “I have removed your sins,” immediate answer. Nathan doesn’t say, “I will come back after three days, I need to fast and hear from the Lord what is God’s judgement regarding this situation.” Immediately God says, “I have forgiven him,” cos He knows that from his heart this man is real.

1 Samuel 28:5-6

⁵ When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly. ⁶ And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets.

No prayer; no answer, the most darkest day of King Saul’s life, he desperately needs an answer. He prays, but no answer. Why you know? Because he was an angry, bitter, unforgiving man and his unforgiveness is also a figment of his imagination. He thinks David has wronged him; David hasn’t wronged him at all. Some people walk with this unforgiveness in their heart saying that, “This person has done this,” when the other person has done nothing to them. They imagine it and that’s how he is going around and that is what brought end of Saul. And that’s why this is the most important thing because forgiveness will define ultimately your relationship with God: who you end up with in eternity. Like I said in the beginning: if you look at any of the greats of the Bible; Joseph, in terms of exaltation, Moses, David, Jesus, Paul; what is similar about all of them? They had enemies innumerable, if not everybody but they forgave everybody and walked consistently in forgiveness, right?

1 Corinthians 13:4

⁴ Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;

You see, one of the biggest issues Christians—we are talking to Christians—Christians mind have been messed up by world. The world teaches the love which is made in China, which is fake. It's all emotions, it's all outward, it's all fake; it's all to do with feelings, it is not real. Real is given from *1 Corinthians 13:4* onwards and Romans. Different places wherever love is mentioned, mark it and meditate on it.

“Love suffers long,” what does it mean? It's talking about a relationship, it suffers. One person is unkind, unkind consistently but in reaction is 'kind,' response is 'kindness'. You think about a person, think you are a girl; girls are the ones usually caught in this trap, think of this girl; you are a girl and you meet this hero six feet tall with blue eyes and all that; he is in his own world and you are in love with him because you think that is the man of my dreams and there is this other person and this other person, and look at all these other person and you realize this person who likes you but whatever you do, this person is always kind to you but you are not interested because you have this Bollywood, Hollywood picture of what love is; it's all feelings.

People don't even understand what love is, because they have never understood the truth because we have swallowed the fake. Bible says love suffers long. Why should love suffer long? Because the one, the object of your love is unkind, but what is your response? You are kind. What does it mean? You are a forgiving person; you are not a wounded person. All you get is wounds; that's what it means, “Suffers long,” you get wounds, but what do you do? Give back His kindness. That's God, we wound Him every day, what do we get in return? Kindness, His kindness, His kindness; that's the nature of a forgiving person. A forgiving person is a person who is wounded but his response is kindness. You look at Joseph, wasn't he wounded? Everybody who came to him, were they not recipients of his kindness? Even when he talked harshly, he was kind in action; harshly to bring them to the reality of their guilt but he was always kind. Moses: 80-120, what a record! For 40 years, unbelievable kindness with a set of people who wounded him: his brother, his sister, his wife, his sons, his deacons, his whole congregation; only kindness.

Imagine you are a pastor and people wound you like that and then they are in trouble, and then will say, “Pastor, will you please pray for me?” ‘I don't want to see your face again,’ but if they need anything, they have to go to this man because only when he prays, God answers, where do they go? Even God is irritated with them and he is standing in the gap, “Lord, Lord, please! Please! One more chance, one more chance, please Lord!” What a man! What a man! No wonder God could speak to him face to face and think about David; think about Moses; think about Paul; think about Jesus. That's why Timothy and all, “My first defense nobody came,” he is not hiding the fact: “Oh, maybe they were busy,” no, “they could have come, they should have come, I gave my life for them; they are all entering into the Kingdom because of me, I am not denying.” He told to Philip, he told in letter to Philemon, right? He told him, “You owe your life to me, I could demand from you, but I am not; I am asking you as a friend, a prayer, please.” So, you could have said, he said no, “I am not making the excuses for the behavior but the fact is that, nobody turned up but I forgive them, I don't hold it against them, I forgive them, I let go, I am not going to carry this, very soon I will be gone, I am not going to hold any of these things in my heart.”

That's what. Don't confuse these things. Now, all those who heard, you will not get all the concepts in one hearing; go back and listen, keep a notebook and write it down, write down the points and say, “Lord, take me through this process, that's where I am able to be reconciled to You.” There is no guarantee that you will be reconciled to every brother or every sister you offended or who offended you, but there is absolute guarantee that if you follow this, you will be reconciled and you will walk with God. You can walk with God, absolute guarantee, you can walk with God. That's the whole idea. The purpose of salvation is that, you will walk with God and with man, but man there are limitations. So, God says in

Romans 12:18

¹⁸ If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

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So, what do I need to do? Forgive. “As far as possible with you, leave at peace with everyone.” As far as possible—with God, it is possible. With man, as far as possible. There is nothing impossible, you can walk with God. With man, He says: as far as possible as it depends on you—where it is dependent upon you, not on the other person; other person may never forgive you even if you go and tell, leave it alone, live at peace. That’s how it works, that’s how the Cross speaks. Amen!

Closing prayer:

Father, once again we come to You, Lord. We just thank You, we just praise You, we just worship You, Lord. We just want to say, Father, we experience—as my wife speaks: buckets and buckets of mercy and grace from You every day and help us to pour out buckets and buckets of mercy and grace every day into the lives of others, Lord. We receive comfort from You, help us to pass that comfort that we have received, Lord. To be forgiven and to forgive, is the closest we will come to the image of Christ Jesus, not in acts of power; but in acts of mercy, to be closest to God and to royalty. Let us never forget it, Lord, and I pray Father, as Your children who have heard, draw near to God and put that first brick in that altar; the brick of forgiveness; first receiving forgiveness from God and the second brick, forgiving others and receiving forgiveness from others; they will see, they can hear from God clearly, they can walk with God clearly. Thank You, Father, thank You Lord, thank You. I speak peace, and I speak rest into every soul, let the balm of Gilead flow; heal their soul and heal their body, let people hear today, “Your sins are forgiven,” let people pick up their mat and walk. Let both happen, Lord. Thank You, thank You Father. For in Jesus’ name we pray, Amen, Amen, Amen.