

## **GateCity Church: Forgiveness.**

### **Hazen Stevens - Sunday, April 2, 2023**

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#### I. Forgive.

A. Introduction: Forgiveness is a gift that we don't fully comprehend. It can be such a spiritually familiar thought that we take it for granted. The revelation of what God has forgiven us ultimately changes our appreciation and love for Jesus.

B. Illustration: The precious in plain sight.

1. An elderly woman kept what she thought was an 'old religious painting' between the kitchen and sitting room of her apartment in Compiègne, a town in northern France. When she took it to her local auctioneer for an appraisal on a whim — she was stunned to discover it was in fact a 13th-century artwork by hallowed Florentine painter Cimabue. Art expert Eric Turquin estimates its value to be between \$4.4 and \$6.6 million, The Guardian reports. The artwork, which had long been hanging above a splattering hot plate, is titled "Christ Mocked," and is part of an eight-scene diptych depicting Christ's passion and crucifixion.<sup>1</sup> An auctioneer named Dominique Le Coent from Acteon Auction House initially valued the painting at \$7,720,200, but sold it for \$26,600,000 to an anonymous French buyer — more than four times what he expected.<sup>2</sup>

C. In the same manner, the precious gift of forgiveness is hidden throughout the Scriptures, even in the most commonplace bible verses. Without Christ's forgiveness of our sins, we would be utterly condemned eternally. Forgiveness is thus a cornerstone of our relationship with God, but something we should not neglect to deeply appreciate and seek to understand. It is a free gift to us but was very costly.

1. Acts 2:38 And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **for the forgiveness of your sins**, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

2. Romans 5:15 **But the gift is not like the trespass.** For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!

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<sup>1</sup> <https://people.com/home/a-27m-painting-was-discovered-in-an-unsuspecting-elderly-womans-kitchen-in-france/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://nypost.com/2019/09/24/woman-discovers-renaissance-painting-worth-millions-in-her-kitchen/>

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3. Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but **the free gift of God** is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (ASV)
  4. Matthew 7:9 “This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,<sup>10</sup> your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.<sup>11</sup> Give us today our daily bread.**12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.**<sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation,<sup>[a]</sup> but deliver us from the evil one.<sup>[b]</sup>’
- D. We are changed when we comprehend the free gift of forgiveness we have been granted.
1. Luke 7:36 When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee’s house and reclined at the table. 37 A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee’s house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. 38 As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. 39 When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner.” 40 Jesus answered him, “Simon, I have something to tell you.” “Tell me, teacher,” he said. 41 “Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii,<sup>[c]</sup> and the other fifty. 42 Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?” 43 Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.” “You have judged correctly,” Jesus said. 44 Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, **“Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. 46 You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. 47 Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”** 48 Then Jesus said to her, **“Your sins are forgiven.”** 49 The other guests began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”<sup>50</sup> Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”
- E. The pitfalls of un-forgiveness.
1. It defiles our hearts with bitterness, and can sabotage our faith.

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- a) Hebrews 12:15 Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. **Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you**, corrupting many. (NLT)
2. Un-forgiveness gives the enemy a foothold in our lives.
  - a) Ephesians 4:26 “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and **do not give the devil a foothold.**
3. It holds up the flow of God’s grace in our lives, and keeps us immature in love.
  - a) 1 Cor 13:4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, **it keeps no record of wrongs.**
  - b) 1 Peter 5:5 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to *your* elders. Yes, all of *you* **be submissive to one another**, and be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, **But gives grace to the humble.**”<sup>6</sup> Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,
4. Hinders the offering of prayer & worship.
  - a) Mark 11:25 And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, **so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.**”
  - b) 1 Peter 3:7 Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, **so that your prayers may not be hindered.**
- F. Illustration: Forgive Everyone Dream.
- G. We are meant to freely give because we have freely received. Though it is free for us to receive by faith, it was costly to Christ.
  - a) 1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is **faithful and just** and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

## **GateCity Church: Forgiveness.**

### **Hazen Stevens - Sunday, April 2, 2023**

---

- b) Ephesians 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, **forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**
- c) Luke 23:34 Jesus said, “Father, **forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.**” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.
- d) Acts 7:59-60 And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, **“Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.**

#### II. Cultivating a forgiving heart by growing in mercy

1. When we base forgiveness on the performance of others, and their ability to apologize or do right, then we aren’t forgiving in the way God forgives which is based on mercy. God forgives us by granting an *undeserved release from the obligation of every debt.*
  - a) Matthew 5:38 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’<sup>39</sup> But I tell you, **do not resist an evil person.** If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.
  - b) Matthew 18:21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?”<sup>22</sup> Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. <sup>23</sup> “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. <sup>24</sup> As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. <sup>25</sup> Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. <sup>26</sup> “At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ <sup>27</sup> **The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.**<sup>28</sup> “But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded.<sup>29</sup> “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, **‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’**<sup>30</sup> “But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. <sup>31</sup> When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.<sup>32</sup> “Then the master called the servant in. **‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. <sup>33</sup> Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow**

## **GateCity Church: Forgiveness.**

### **Hazen Stevens - Sunday, April 2, 2023**

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**servant just as I had on you?’** 34 In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

**35 “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”**

- c) Matthew 9:9 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth. **“Follow me,” he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.**10 While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. 11 When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” 12 On hearing this, Jesus said, **“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 13 But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’[a] For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”**
2. When we understand that forgiveness comes not on the based of our performance, but on God’s desire to show mercy, then we begin to understand how God’s forgiveness differs from the human version.
3. *Two Ledgers Illustration:* Visualize two ledgers. On one is a list of all your sins; on the other is the righteousness of Christ. Now exchange your ledger for Christ’s. This exemplifies **justification (forgiveness of sin)** — transferring our sin to Christ and His righteousness to us. 2 Cor 5:21 “He made Him (Christ) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Justification carries no guilt with it and has no memory of past transgressions. Christ paid for all of our sins at the cross — past, present, and future. Hebrews 10:17 says, “And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” We are completely forgiven by God!
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- a) *Hebrews 10:17* Then he adds: “Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.”[c] **18** And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary. **19** Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place **by the blood of Jesus,**
4. He has chosen to no longer remember the sins He has forgiven, the blood of Christ has given us the confidence to enter the Holy Place before Him. Having experienced this mercy (by the Holy Spirit) is what changes us to become merciful.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://lifetrainingcounseling.org/justification-exchanging-ledgers/>

## **GateCity Church: Forgiveness.**

### **Hazen Stevens - Sunday, April 2, 2023**

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5. God's forgiveness is restorative and based on mercy, he not only cancels the debt but he fills the bank account. The world's accounting of righting a wrong is based on retribution, you pay and then the debt can be forgiven. This is not how the forgiveness of sins happens in the Kingdom, He pays and we are forgiven and transformed.
  - a) Luke 15:22 "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! **Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it.** Let's have a feast and celebrate. 24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.
  
6. Many of us are refusing to forgive ourselves and others for the very things that God has forgiven us for. If any of your sins weren't forgiven, then you would go to hell for it. We also hold debt and grievances against people who wronged us, but will never apologize, make it right, and in some cases can't because they are dead. Yet we are holding on to un-forgiveness. We are drinking a bitter poison, and hoping the person that wronged us gets sick.
  - a) Luke 15:28 "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and **pleaded with him.** 29 But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'
  
7. Un-forgiveness cost the older brother the party that the Father wanted to include him in! He did not understand the Father's heart of mercy toward him.
  - a) Luke 15:31 "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 32 But **we had to celebrate and be glad,** because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

#### B. Practicals on how to practice forgiveness?

1. **Choose to Forgive:** Forgiveness begins as an act of the will, and often the feelings follow the choice. Blessing a person and praying for them will often unlock the heart of the offense. I once wrote a letter blessing a person and calling out their best qualities, to help my heart forgive them. List out the

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places people have hurt or wronged you, where you have un-forgiveness, and if it is appropriate seek restoration. Practice showing mercy.

- a) Proverbs 19:11 A person's wisdom yields patience;  
**it is to one's glory to overlook an offense.**
  - b) Matthew 5:44 But I say to you, **Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,**
2. **Seek Compassion (even on yourself):** You know that you have sufficiently reached a place of forgiveness when you; (1) Feel compassion and care for the people that have wronged you (2) don't flinch at the thought of seeing them in the grocery store, (3) and hope for their eternal best.
- a) What forgiveness is not: Forgiveness is not the same as restoration or being willing to trust again the person who wronged you. You can forgive a person for a wrong, but forgiveness may or may not require restoration of that relationship. This is an important point of ***discernment***. Forgiveness does not say what was done to you is right, forgiveness says, "God is your judge I am not. I am trusting Him to right this wrong, so I can forgive you and have mercy toward you."
  - (1) Romans 12:19 Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: **"It is mine to avenge; I will repay,"**<sup>[d]</sup> says the Lord. 20 On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."
3. **Contemplate God's Mercy** towards us.
- a) Psalm 86:3 Be merciful to me, O Lord,  
For I cry to You all day long.<sup>4</sup> <sup>[b]</sup>Rejoice the soul of Your servant,  
For to You, O Lord, I lift up my soul. 5 For You, Lord, **are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You.**

C. Call to Action: Forgive Everyone...