

All I want for Christmas is Peace and Forgiveness: Part 2

12.7.25

Opening

A. Last week, we started to explore the topic of forgiveness.

1. Forgiveness feels like surgery.
2. It's scary to think about, painful to endure, and recovery can be equally as hard.
3. But the result, as we look back, is better health.

B. Forgiveness is also messy.

1. Forgiveness requires us to let go of what feels like a natural right.
2. When a believer forgives, there is NO GUARANTEE that the other person will accept our forgiveness, will stop their behavior, or forgive us either.
3. **Forgiveness is an act of mercy, not merit.**
 - a. We don't receive forgiveness from God because we are worth it, but because God is merciful.
 - b. We don't give forgiveness because they deserve it, but because Christ in us is merciful.

Ephesians 4:25–32 (CSB)

²⁵ Therefore, putting away lying, **speak the truth, each one to his neighbor**, because we are members of one another. ²⁶ **Be angry and do not sin.** Don't let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and don't give the devil an opportunity. ²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal. Instead, he is to do honest work with his own hands, so that he has something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹ No foul language should come from your mouth, but only what is good for building up someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear. ³⁰ **And don't grieve God's Holy Spirit. You were sealed by him for the day of redemption.** ³¹ **Let all bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting**

and slander be removed from you, along with all malice. ³² And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.

Colossians 3:12–15 (CSB)

¹² Therefore, as God’s chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, **put on** compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and **forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive.** ¹⁴ Above all, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ, to which you were also called in one body, rule your hearts. And be thankful.

1. You can have the Spirit of God or the Spirit of Unforgiveness, but you can’t have both.

A. Ephesians teaches that we can grieve the Holy Spirit.

1. I’ve heard the analogy made that the Holy Spirit is a lot like the Jedi “force” in Star Wars.
2. But the “Force” is not a person, the Holy Spirit is!
3. Because the Holy Spirit is a person and not a “force,” the Spirit of God feels emotions.
 - a. And one of those emotions is grief.
 - b. The Holy Spirit is grieved when we put Him in an environment that is contrary to His nature.

B. What is the nature or personality of the Holy Spirit?

1. How can we know if we are grieving the Holy Spirit?
2. Paul wrote in Ephesians 5 and throughout Romans regarding the nature of the flesh versus the nature of the Spirit.
 - a. A big takeaway is this:
 - b. If you want to know the nature of a spirit or a person, look at their fruit.
 - c. Paul lists the fruit of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit in Eph 5..
 - d. Notice that anger, back-biting, unforgiveness, and jealousy are fruit or products of the flesh.

3. Paul teaches this really clearly in Galatians 5.

Gal. 5:13-25

¹³ For you were called to be free, brothers and sisters; only don't use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another through love. ¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement: **Love your neighbor as yourself.** ¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, watch out, or you will be consumed by one another.

THE SPIRIT VERSUS THE FLESH

¹⁶ I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar. I am warning you about these things—as I warned you before—that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things. ²⁴ Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

C. Did you notice how long the list of the work of flesh is?

1. It feels a lot larger than the fruit of the Spirit.
2. The fruit of the Spirit is focused, controlled, and, in our natural self, impossible.

D. The Spirit of God who lives in all believers is not compatible with the fruits of Unforgiveness.

1. So if you want the peace of God and the freedom of God, then you are going to have to ruthlessly deal with the unforgiveness and bitterness in your life.
2. The Holy Spirit will not stay in an unhospitable environment forever.
3. When you walk in jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, envy, and anything similar you are choosing to walk AWAY from the Spirit of God and towards the Enemy of your soul.

- a. It's like the kid deciding whether to hold balls in his hands or pet the dog.
 - b. He wants both, but he can't have both.
 - c. He must decide to empty his hands of the toy and pet the dog or not pet the dog.
4. In our lives, we can have peace, or we can have anger, but we can't hold on to both.

2. What are some of the dynamics of Forgiveness?

A. Hopefully, all of us are convinced that we should forgive and need to forgive.

1. This part might seem simple, but the first step in forgiveness is recognizing we should forgive.
 - a. But forgiveness isn't easy.
 - b. And most of us are not taught how to forgive.
2. Our parents make us say, "I'm sorry" when we do wrong, but that isn't the same as forgiving someone or asking for forgiveness.
 - a. Forgiveness is an action of the whole person.
 - b. Forgiveness requires agreement and action from our heart, our mind, and our being.
 - c. Too often, we are taught compliance, not forgiveness.
 - d. We practice restraint, not forgiveness.
 - e. God is inviting us to move from a posture that says, "it's fine to I forgive."

B. Because forgiveness is supernatural, not natural, we need help forgiving people.

1. Everyone will have to forgive multiple people throughout their lives.
2. Knowing how to forgive and to let go of bitterness can open us up to the peace of God.
3. Let me share 5 dynamics of forgiveness.

3. Dynamic #1: Forgiveness is for the person, not the action.

A. People have an amazing capacity to hurt other people.

1. Because we can hurt others, we often exercise that ability.
2. The longer we live the more we have been hurt by people, their choices, and their sins.
 - a. We may classify the hurt by different names and titles.
 - b. But at the fundamental level, we are hurt by people, not by things.

c. Words, things, and actions are all tools we use to hurt people.

B. True and total forgiveness is directed toward the person who hurt us.

1. Upon the cross, Jesus said Father forgive them...

a. Jesus' forgiveness was directed at the people not just their actions.

b. In Colossians 3:13, bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive.

c. Paul said we are to forgive one another (personal pronoun).

2. Our culture today tries to separate the sin from the person committing the sin.

a. But you can't treat the sin separately from the person who is sinning.

b. You can't separate the pain someone has caused you from the person themselves.

3. Most of us have used or heard the phrase, "Hate the sin, love the sinner."

a. Do you know where that is found in the Bible?

b. It isn't. It was a quote from Gandhi (It's not even Christian).¹

c. Jesus knows we cannot separate a person's action from their identity.

d. This is why the Scripture always identifies people by their sins: murderers, adulterers, thieves, and so on.

e. We cannot separate our actions from who we are.

4. Our actions come from our nature and when we are led by our sinful nature, we do hurtful things.

C. You will never experience God's peace and freedom for your life if you refuse to forgive the person who hurt you.

1. When we try to forgive the action without forgiving the person, we haven't truly forgiven anything.

2. I see a lot of people trying to forgive the actions without forgiving the person.

3. The key to forgiveness is not denial of sin or separation of sin.

a. Think about how God dealt with us:

b. If our sins are not forgiven, do our sins go to hell or does the whole person?

¹ St. Augustine had a phrase that was close but not the same in meaning.

4. You cannot forgive the person who hurt you if you separate their actions from the person themselves.

- a. This sounds wrong and goes against modern-day ethics.
- b. But a person's sin cannot be separated from the person themselves.
- c. That is why Jesus died to provide forgiveness and salvation for the whole person, not just a part of them.
- d. That is why we, as believers, are given a new nature at salvation because the sinful nature is such a part of us that we cannot separate who we are from what we do.
- e. Sin is such a powerful thing that the Holy Spirit has to make us into a "New Creation" in Christ Jesus.

5. Because God calls us to forgive as we have been forgiven, we must forgive the whole person who has wronged us and hurt us.

- a. But how?
- b. How can I afford to forgive those who have genuinely hurt me?

D. I can afford to forgive the person who hurt me because I know God is more just and righteous than I am, and He must do what is right because He can do no wrong.

- 1. Our abilities and willingness to forgive are reflections of our trust in God.
- 2. If I feel like I must hold on to my anger, my bitterness, and my unforgiveness, it is because I don't trust God to do the right thing.
- 3. But when I forgive someone their debt and sin against me, I am practicing what Jesus taught His disciples:
 - a. When the disciples wanted to learn to pray, Jesus taught:
 - b. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us.
 - c. I can forgive those who have wronged me because I trust God to do what is right.
 - 1. His sense of justice is infinitely better than mine.
 - 2. My view of justice is tainted by sin, hurt, and wrong motives, but God cannot fail to do what is right.
- E. We don't excuse people's sins; we appeal to God's mercy.
 - 1. We can forgive without endorsing their sin.

2. Forgiveness does not pardon sin or mitigate punishment.
3. But instead of actively praying for someone's demise, we should actively pray for that person to receive mercy.

- a. Mercy is compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm.
- b. Even if it is within our American right to hurt or punish the person who wronged us, we should pursue mercy.
- c. For it was mercy we received from God.
- d. Micah 7:18-19 gives us a picture into how God deals with our sin:

¹⁸ Who is a God like you,
forgiving iniquity and passing over rebellion
for the remnant of his inheritance?
He does not hold on to his anger forever
because he delights in faithful love.
¹⁹ He will again have compassion on us;
he will vanquish our iniquities.
You will cast all our sins
into the depths of the sea.

- e. If God can forgive me so completely, He can help me to forgive others completely as well.

Dynamic #2. Forgiveness means I give up the right to hurt the person who hurt me.

A. I'm not talking about justice.

- a. Someone who has committed a crime needs to be punished.
- b. But when I go out of my way to hurt someone who has hurt me, I become no better than the one who hurt me.
- c. Unforgiveness puts me on the same level as the one who hurt me.
- d. But God doesn't want me to live on that level, but on His level and His level is the level of forgiveness, grace, and mercy.

B. As long as I hold on to the hope of hurting the one who hurt me, I have not forgiven them.

1. Forgiveness is the willful letting go of the right to hurt the other person.

2. When someone has ruined your life, you will want that person to suffer:
 - a. You want them to feel shame.
 - b. You want them to feel guilt.
 - c. You want them to hurt the same way you hurt or even worse.
 - d. If you find yourself dreaming of hurting that person in a way that it would be impossible for you to get in trouble, you haven't forgiven.
3. Even if someone hasn't ruined your life, you still want them to pay for their rude remarks, their anger, or the inconvenience they caused you.
 - a. Let me tell you the Gospel truth:
 - b. If you hold on to your right to punish those who have hurt you, then you willingly give up your right to receive God's mercy.

Matthew 6:11-15

- 11 Give us today our daily bread.
- 12 And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
- 13 And do not bring us into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.
- 14 "For if you forgive others their offenses, your heavenly Father will forgive you as well.
- 15 But if you don't forgive others, your Father will not forgive your offenses.

C. The Law of Sowing and Reaping is a Divine law.

1. You sow anger, you receive anger.
2. You sow mercy, you reap mercy.
3. You sow forgiveness, you reap forgiveness.
4. And you reap these things not only from people but from God as well.
5. How serious does God treat the topic of forgiveness?
 - a. So serious that He withholds forgiveness to those who refuse to forgive.
 - b. God has established a boundary that He will not violate:
 - c. Those who do not forgive will not experience themselves.

D. That is why We need to learn to write people's offenses in the sand instead of in the concrete.

1. Concrete is permanent and unmovable.

2. Sand is shifting and quickly erases what had been written.
3. Imagine if God had not gone through the extreme measure of providing forgiveness through the Blood of Jesus?
 - a. What if God, instead of casting our sin as far as the East is from the West, made an immovable monument for the world to see and mock our sin?
 - b. We would be so full of guilt and condemnation that we would want to die.
4. Many of us tend to build monuments out of the sins others have committed against us, but God calls us to tear them down and forgive.

Dynamic #3: Never trust your tongue when your heart is bitter.

A. If I am constantly telling people how someone has hurt me then I have not yet totally forgiven.

1. I'm not talking about therapy or counseling.
2. I'm not talking about the need to share with a pastor or spouse.
3. I'm talking about that conversation that you had with an acquaintance the other day, hoping they would change their perspective on the person who hates you.
 - a. I'm talking about character assassination.
 - b. I'm talking about gossip.
 - c. I'm talking about those times when you can't wait to share what happened to you in order to inflict pain and punishment on the one who hurt you!

B. R.T. Kendall writes about this in "Total Forgiveness":

*"But the real reason we usually tell is to punish. And one weapon at our disposal to accomplish this is our tongue. We tell everyone else what we know in order to make our offender look bad! If we can hurt their credibility or reputation in return for their hurting us, "Good!" we say. "It serves them right." We blab to everyone we can find what was done to us as a way of getting even."*²

² R. T. Kendall, [*Total Forgiveness: When Everything in You Wants to Hold a Grudge, Point a Finger, and Remember the Pain—god Wants You to Lay It All aside*](#) (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2010).

1. When we are bitter, we spread the poison to everyone we can.
2. But God saved us so we can bring life, not death, to those around us.
3. Gossip never brings life to people.

C. How do I know I'm gossiping?

1. When we share information with someone who doesn't need to know and is not directly involved, then we are engaging in gossip.
 2. When you talk about a person instead of to the person, it is gossip.
 3. Gossip is the fruit of our sinful nature and the fruit of unforgiveness in our lives.
 - a. And gossip is, without a question, a sin that separates us from the love of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. If you want the peace and freedom of God in your life, you are going to have to give up the right to gossip and talk about people.
 4. Next time you have a problem, don't let it fester but GO to the person and discuss it then.
 - a. IF you wait, then the resulting pain and turmoil you experience is YOUR fault and not the other person.
- b. Mark 11:25**
- ²⁵ And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven will also forgive you your wrongdoing."

Dynamic #4: My unforgiveness affects everything I love.

A. The poison of unforgiveness poisons everything I touch.

1. It poisons my relationships, my dreams, my health, my finances, my thoughts, my emotions, my place of work, my place of worship.
2. Eventually, I will pull back from everything and everyone.
3. We end up being that bitter cat woman who has 30 cats, and nobody talks to.
4. Or we become that Cranky old man, telling everyone to get off his lawn and calling the cops on anybody who lingers on the street.
5. Just as a little bit of poison ruins the whole pot, bitterness poisons everything we touch.

B. **Unforgiveness causes us to see offense where there is no offense.**

1. If you live in a life of unforgiveness, anger, and bitterness long enough, you will become paranoid.
2. Because your inner world will be so poisoned that you can't see life without viewing it through your poisoned lens.
3. In the absence of God's peace in your life, you will be filled with the poison of unforgiveness.
4. You can't feed poison and healthy food out of the same bowl because poison will win every time.

Dynamic #5: Forgiveness opens up our capacity for God's love and peace.

A. "I can't go against his nature (by harboring unforgiveness) and expect his blessings to flow."

1. Some of you are wondering why you aren't being blessed or why you are not enjoying the presence of God, and sometimes, the answer is because you have chosen a path contrary to God's will for you.

2. **You can't violate his nature and still receive the Blessing.**

B. When you and I exercise forgiveness, we open ourselves up for the flow of God's peace and love.

1. Forgiveness is at the heart of God.
2. It is the reason why He sent his Son.
3. And He commands us to practice forgiveness in our lives.

C. Every time we forgive, big or small, we are demonstrating God's love to our world and to ourselves.

1. As we demonstrate God's love, His Holy Spirit lives and dwells in us.
2. And when the Spirit lives in us we experience the peace and presence of God.

Apply:

1. How can you tell the difference between unforgiveness and setting boundaries?
 - a. Let's define boundaries: This is from the great book *Boundaries* by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend.

- b. “Boundaries are anything that helps to differentiate you from someone else, and shows where you begin and end.”
- c. Boundaries keep the good in and the bad out, but also permit the bad to leave and the good to come in.
- d. Boundaries are like fences with gates, and not solid walls.
- e. Boundaries define where you end and I begin and I’m only responsible for my yard. God also limits what he will allow in his yard. He confronts sin and allows consequences for behavior. He guards his house and will not allow evil things to go on there. He invites people in who will love him, and he lets his love flow outward to them at the same time. The “gates” of his boundaries open and close appropriately. In the same way he gave us his “likeness” (Gen. 1:26), he gave us personal responsibility within limits. He wants us to “rule over” the earth and to be responsible stewards over the life he has given us. To do that, we need to develop boundaries like God’s.³

2. Forgiveness does not mean reconciliation.

- a. My forgiving of you does not mean I have to put myself in danger again.
- b. I can forgive you of your trespass but I don’t have to restore you to the same seat at the dinner table.
- c. Forgiveness means I no longer hold on to the right to hurt you, but I don’t have to let you hurt me again.
- d. Forgiveness NEVER EXCUSES abuse.
- e. Forgiveness NEVER requires us to deny what is happening.
- f. Forgiveness does not cover up.
- g. Forgiveness does not put vulnerable people back in harm's way.
- h. If this is what Christianity means to you, you are drinking from the Kool-Aid.

3. How do I know if I’ve forgiven? Every time I remember, I must forgive again. RT

KENDALL.

- a. It’s been years since someone has hurt you, and you see their car in the parking lot: your heart starts racing and anxiety comes upon you, take a breath and say a prayer.
- b. Lord, I have forgiven them but right now this is real again. Help me, give me peace and strength, and Lord help me to live in forgiveness and mercy.

³ Boundaries: Cloud and Townsend, 31.

4. I want to end with a story so good and powerful; it is part of Scripture.

Matthew 18:21–35 (CSB)

THE PARABLE OF THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT

²¹ Then Peter approached him and asked, “Lord, how many times must I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? As many as seven times?”

²² “I tell you, not as many as seven,” Jesus replied, “but seventy times seven.

²³ “For this reason, the kingdom of heaven can be compared to a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ When he began to settle accounts, one who owed ten thousand talents was brought before him. ²⁵ Since he did not have the money to pay it back, his master commanded that he, his wife, his children, and everything he had be sold to pay the debt.

²⁶ “At this, the servant fell facedown before him and said, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you everything.’ ²⁷ Then the master of that servant had compassion, released him, and forgave him the loan.

²⁸ “That servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him, started choking him, and said, ‘Pay what you owe!’

²⁹ “At this, his fellow servant fell down and began begging him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.’ ³⁰ But he wasn’t willing. Instead, he went and threw him into prison until he could pay what was owed. ³¹ When the other servants saw what had taken place, they were deeply distressed and went and reported to their master everything that had happened. ³² Then, after he had summoned him, his master said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. ³³ Shouldn’t you also have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴ And because he was angry, his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured until he could pay everything that was owed. ³⁵ So also my heavenly Father will do to you unless every one of you forgives his brother or sister from your heart.”

PRAYER

Appendix: Scripture verses about boundaries

[2 Timothy 3:5](#) holding to the form of godliness but denying its power. Avoid these people.

[Romans 16:17–18](#) [17](#) Now I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who create divisions and obstacles contrary to the teaching that you learned. Avoid them, [18](#) because such people do not serve our Lord Christ but their own appetites. They deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting with smooth talk and flattering words.

[Ephesians 5:11](#) Don't participate in the fruitless works of darkness, but instead expose them.

[2 Thessalonians 3:6](#) Now we command you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from every brother or sister who is idle and does not live according to the tradition received from us.

[1 Corinthians 5:9–11](#) [9](#) I wrote to you in a letter not to associate with sexually immoral people. [10](#) I did not mean the immoral people of this world or the greedy and swindlers or idolaters; otherwise you would have to leave the world. [11](#) But actually, I wrote you not to associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister and is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or verbally abusive, a drunkard or a swindler. Do not even eat with such a person.

[2 John 10–11](#) [10](#) If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your home, and do not greet him; [11](#) for the one who greets him shares in his evil works.

[Psalm 1:1](#) How happy is the one who does not walk in the advice of the wicked or stand in the pathway with sinners or sit in the company of mockers!

[Proverbs 14:7](#) Stay away from a foolish person; you will gain no knowledge from his speech.

[2 Corinthians 6:14–17](#) [14](#) Do not be yoked together with those who do not believe. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship does light have with darkness? [15](#) What agreement does Christ have with Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? [16](#) And what agreement does the temple of God have with idols? For we are the temple of the living God, as God said: **I will dwell and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.** [17](#) Therefore, **come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord; do not touch any unclean thing, and I will welcome you.**

[1 Timothy 6:3–5](#) [3](#) If anyone teaches false doctrine and does not agree with the sound teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the teaching that promotes godliness, [4](#) he is conceited and understands nothing, but has an unhealthy interest in disputes and arguments over words. From these come envy, quarreling, slander, evil suspicions, [5](#) and constant disagreement among people whose minds are depraved and deprived of the truth, who imagine that godliness is a way to material gain.

[Titus 3:10–11](#) [10](#) Reject a divisive person after a first and second warning. [11](#) For you know that such a person has gone astray and is sinning; he is self-condemned.

[Proverbs 13:20](#) The one who walks with the wise will become wise, but a companion of fools will suffer harm.

[Proverbs 9:6](#) Leave inexperience behind, and you will live; pursue the way of understanding.

[Psalm 26:4–5](#) [4](#) I do not sit with the worthless or associate with hypocrites. [5](#) I hate a crowd of evildoers, and I do not sit with the wicked.