

## Forgiveness

2 Corinthians 2:5-11

Forgiveness, I dare say, is the most difficult, yet fundamental principle of the Christian faith! Christ has forgiven our sins by the shedding of His blood on the cross, yet we have a hard time forgiving others for something that has occurred 20 years ago. Forgiveness is not merely a suggestion within the Christian life; it is a vital, essential practice. It is a mirror reflecting the boundless grace God has shown us. In our text, the Apostle Paul addresses a challenging situation within the Corinthian church involving a man who had caused significant pain and scandal. The church had disciplined him, and rightly so. The offense had been dealt with. But Paul's message shifts here, moving from discipline to restoration. By the way, proper church discipline that we don't hear about much anymore, is designed towards restoration. Paul outlines three powerful reasons why we must practice the grace of forgiveness: **It brings restoration to the offender, it brings health to the community, and it denies the enemy's plans. Listen to these verses dealing with forgiveness: Ephesians 4:31-32** ties these ideas together perfectly: ***"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."*** Our model is the divine act of God forgiving us. **Matthew 6:14-15**, Jesus makes it frighteningly plain: ***"For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."*** This is a serious command, linking our experience of grace directly to our extension of grace. **Colossians 3:13** offers the simple rule: ***"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."***

### **I. Forgive For the Sake of Restoration (vv. 5-7) Read verses 5-7**

The situation in Corinth was messy. An individual had committed a serious sin, causing grief to Paul and the entire congregation. The church had taken action—"the punishment inflicted...is sufficient." The purpose of this discipline was never to destroy the person, but to bring about repentance.

Once true repentance was evident, the mission changed from judgment to comfort. The call to "forgive and comfort him" is a divine imperative. We must be wary of a justice that turns into vengeance. If we refuse to forgive a repentant person, we risk driving them into "excessive sorrow" and despair.

The gospel is a message of second chances. Think of David after his great sin (Psalm 51). Think of Peter after denying Christ (John 21). When the heart is genuinely repentant, our response must align with God's heart: swift to forgive and ready to restore. Forgiveness restores both you and the one who caused the pain.

**II. Forgive For The Rehabilitation of The Church (vv. 8-10)** The health of the community of believers is critical! **Read verse 8-10**

Forgiveness is intensely personal, but it is also profound for the community. Paul urges the Corinthians to "reaffirm your love for him." This isn't just about the offender's well-being; it is about the church's health.

An unforgiving church is a sick church. Bitterness is an acid that corrodes fellowship. When we hold grudges against one another, it creates fractures, tension, and mistrust. Paul sees this obedience to forgive as a "test" of their faith and maturity.

The unity we are called to maintain (Ephesians 4:3) is impossible without a constant flow of grace. When we forgive as a community, we demonstrate a unified obedience to Christ's command to love one another, creating an environment where healing can thrive.

### **III. Forgive to Ruin Satan's Plans (v. 11)**

This is perhaps the most practical and sobering reason Paul provides. Unforgiveness is one of Satan's primary tools. He uses our natural desire for justice, turns it into a desire for vengeance, and then binds us in bitterness and anger.

If we refuse to forgive, the devil has achieved two victories with one stone: he has potentially driven the offender away from the fold, and he has imprisoned the forgiver in a cell of resentment. 1 Peter 5:8: ***"Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."***

Satan's "schemes" are simple: divide and conquer. He wins when we are consumed by anger and resentment. We defeat him not with complex strategy, but with simple obedience to Christ's command to forgive. When we release a debt, we disarm the enemy.

Forgiveness is never easy. It defies our sense of human justice. It demands humility and a supernatural reliance on God's grace. Forgiveness in Christ is only possible through the power of the Holy Spirit! The call in 2 Corinthians 2 is clear: the time for discipline was over; the time for restoration had arrived. Let us not be a people who hold onto sin and pain. Let us, instead, be known for our radical grace. Let us forgive and comfort those who repent. Let us maintain the health of our community. Above all, let us disarm the enemy by obeying our Lord's command to forgive, just as we have been forgiven. Amen.