

Theme: Unforgiveness poisons relationships, hardens our own hearts, and disrupts our fellowship with God, but the wise person forgives as God has forgiven them, fostering healing to everyone involved.

I. The Foolishness of Cancel Culture

- A. The recent rise of cancel culture
- B. "We live in a culture that has demanded payment for sin but offered no means of atonement." Douglas Murray/Tim Keller
- C. Cancel culture loves to expose and judge what are thought to be sins but offers no path to forgiveness and reconciliation.
- D. This is the opposite of the way of wisdom!

II. The Wisdom of Forgiveness

- A. Two paths regarding sin and relational conflict
Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.
Proverbs 10:12
 - 1. Hatred stirs up strife, but love does the opposite.
 - 2. Love does not stir up strife but covers offenses.
 - 3. Cover offenses = forgive sin and restore relationship
Blessed is the one **whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered**. ² Blessed is the man against whom **the LORD counts no iniquity**... Psalm 32:1-2
You forgave the iniquity of your people; you covered all their sin. Selah Psalm 85:2
 - a. To cover sin is to forgive it, to not count it against the person
 - b. The example and standard for this is Divine forgiveness – as God forgives our sin to restore relationship, so the wise person forgives the sin of others to restore the relationship.

- B. The path of hatred/fool and the path of love/wisdom
Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.
Proverbs 10:12

- 1. The contrast is between hatred and love.
- 2. Love looks to forgive and restore relationships
Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. 1 Peter 4:8
Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 1 Corinthians 13:7
Love unites us with God; love covers a multitude of sins; love endures all things, is patient in all things.
– 1 Clement 49:5
 - a. Peter is alluding to Proverbs 10:12.
 - b. Paul says love “bears” all things – literally “covers”
 - c. Clement brings these together – love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8); endures all things (1 Corinthians 13:7)
- 3. The path of hatred is the path of the fool, while the path of love is the path of wisdom.
- 4. The path of the fool holds on to offense, maximizes sin, and increases relational breakdown, but the wise person overlooks and forgives sin so that the relationship can be restored.
Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.
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III. The Cost of Unforgiveness

- A. Unforgiveness ruins relationships and disrupts community
Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.
Proverbs 10:12

1. Hatred will not forgive but instead stirs up and multiplies strife.
2. This always harms relationships and undermines the community.
Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends. Prov 17:9
 - a. A very similar proverb to our text!
 - b. Love covers the offense, but hatred will spread the offense to others, leading to further relational breakdown.
 - c. Foolish hatred magnifies sin to the detriment of the relationship, while wise love forgives sin to see the relationship restored so that it might flourish.

B. Unforgiveness hardens my own heart

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

³²Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Ephes 4:31-32

1. Two contrasting heart conditions and associated actions are given by Paul
2. One heart is bitter, angry, and hateful, while the other is kind, tender, and forgiving.
3. When I am unwilling to forgive, it sets my heart on a path to being bitter, angry, and hard; when I practice forgiveness it softens my own heart as well.
4. Unforgiveness not only hurts my relationship with others; it poisons my own heart!
"Not forgiving is like drinking rat poison and then waiting for the rat to die." — Anne Lamott
5. Unforgiveness is ultimately self-destructive!

C. Unforgiveness disrupts my relationship with God

Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; **forgive, and you will be forgiven**; Luke 6:37

1. Jesus links receiving forgiveness from God with forgiving others!
2. This is part of the Lord's Prayer! (Matthew 6:13)
3. It is also in the parable of the wicked, unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:23-35)
4. A heart that is harsh, judgmental, condemning, and unforgiving will eventually become hard and unable to receive forgiveness itself!
5. This is not salvation by works; it is the law of sowing and reaping!
6. Unforgiveness is ultimately self-destructive, for it not only unleashes death in the community around me, but within my own heart and life as well!

IV. Walking the Path of Forgiveness

A. Admit that forgiveness is not easy!

1. Everyone thinks forgiveness is a lovely idea until they have something to forgive. — CS Lewis
2. Scripture commands forgiveness so much because we find it so hard to practice!

B. Steps to practice forgiveness

1. Be slow to take offense!
Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense. Proverbs 19:11
The vexation of a fool is known at once, but the prudent ignores an insult. Proverbs 12:16

- a. The wise person learns to not be easily offended!
- b. Wisdom recognizes everyone has bad days and says and does things in a bad moment.
- c. Wisdom is willing to overlook such momentary lapses.
- d. Wisdom also realizes the difference between sins needing forgiveness and differences of opinion/arguments that should usually be dropped.

The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out. Proverbs 17:14
- e. Many today are looking for reasons to be offended – but this is the path of the fool!
- f. Often, we just need to let it go!

2. Gently address truly hurtful actions and sins rather than letting them fester and grow

Better is open rebuke than hidden love. ⁶ Faithful are the wounds of a friend... Proverbs 27:5-6

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Galatians 6:1

- a. I know that something needs to be addressed because my attempts to simply overlook it have not worked – I have not been able to move past it.
- b. It is better, and more loving, to address sin when necessary.
- c. It can be painful to address sin that is hurting a relationship, but it is far better than letting it fester and destroy the relationship.
- d. But this must be done GENTLY, not harshly or arrogantly, always being aware of my own sin and weakness.

3. Remind myself of the forgiveness I have in Christ!

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, **forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.** Colossians 3:12-13

- a. I am commanded to forgive as Christ as forgiven me
- b. When I reflect on the tender forgiveness I have been given in Christ, it prompts me to forgive others.
- c. If I am finding it hard to forgive someone, I need to focus on the Gospel and the forgiveness I have in Christ.
- d. I must forgive as God forgives me. This includes the forgiveness of all my sins, the full depth of forgiveness I am forgiven in Christ, the forgiveness for sins I commit repeatedly, and the restoration God gives to me.

To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you. – CS Lewis

4. Forgive, pray, and leave it in God's hands!

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰ To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Romans 12:18-21

- a. True forgiveness looks to see the relationship restored it at all possible (sometimes it is not).

- b. Even if the other person does not agree, will not confess, or is unrepentant, I do not let it harden me, nor do I long for vengeance.
- c. I leave the issue in the hands of God; He knows how to handle it!
- d. I even try to be kind and bless the person to restore the relationship if possible.
- e. In all cases, I avoid allowing bitterness or unforgiveness to fester in my heart as this will only damage me and will not lead to a godly resolution.
- f. After Hours – When full reconciliation is not possible

V. Applying the Word

A. Am I walking in the wisdom of forgiveness?

1. CS Lewis is right – this sounds good, but it is hard!
 - a. Our sinful nature does not want to forgive!
 - b. Our culture encourages unforgiveness, preferring to go “no contact” to working through relational difficulties.
 - c. Technology, both mobility and online abilities, makes it easier than ever to choose to drop the relationship and harbor resentment and unforgiveness in my heart.
2. But unforgiveness is poison, while forgiveness is a healing balm to both relationships and my own soul.
3. Is the Spirit bringing anyone to mind that I have not forgiven?
 - a. It could be a close relation, a friend, a coworker
 - b. It could even be someone who has moved away or is dead!

- c. The issue is unforgiveness in my heart, not proximity
- 4. Ask the Lord for grace to help you forgive!
- 5. If necessary and helpful, try to restore the relationship.

B. The Table of Forgiveness

1. We forgive as God has forgiven us!
2. Here we remember and freshly receive forgiveness from God.
3. This frees us to forgive others.
4. We are freshly blessed with forgiveness – and we then freshly extend that forgiveness to others.

The Wisdom of Forgiveness

Proverbs 10:12

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Communion

Benediction: Psalm 32:1-2

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You are blessed because the Lord has forgiven your transgression; He has covered your sin by the blood of Christ. In Him, the LORD counts no iniquity against you. You are forgiven and blessed – so go forth to forgive and be a blessing. Psalm 32:1-2