

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expository
Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew**

43- The Kingdom of Heaven and Its Citizens- Part 23
Secret Purity and Public Hypocrisy- Part 6

Church March 05, 2023

Matthew 6:1-24

1 "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.

2 "So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

3 "But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

4 so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

5 "When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

6 But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

7 "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.

8 So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

9 "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

10 'Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.

11 'Give us this day our daily bread.

12 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]'

14 "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

15 But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

16 "Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face

18 so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;

21 for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22 "The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.

23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen*

Now you might want to know that I got this Sermon from my own Effort to obey Jesus and pray, "*in this Way*". And so, as I spent time in Prayer and labored over the Issues or the Subjects that Jesus taught in this "Prayer Guide"- I began to write down my thoughts- which I then developed into this Sermon.

Now as we examine what Jesus is teaching here in this Passage of what we call, the "*Sermon on the Mount*"- we see that Jesus is addressing four Topics:

1. Giving to the Poor (verses 2-4)
2. Praying (verses 5-15)
3. Fasting (verses 16-18)
4. Wealth (verses 19-24)

... and Jesus is teaching that the *new* people; of the New Covenant- who will inherit this *new* "Kingdom of Heaven"- will have the Attributes that He talks about here. And three weeks ago, we began looking at what Jesus taught about the wondrous Mystery of "Prayer"- and I want to *continue* this today.

Now two weeks ago, we found out several things that Jesus never taught. Such as:

1. There is no particular *Posture* in Prayer
2. There is no particular *Place* to pray
3. There is no particular *Time* to pray
4. There is no particular *Attitude* in Prayer

... but what Jesus DID teach is that there are certain things about Prayer that matter to God like:

1. We MUST pray (in Faith-believing)
2. We MUST be *genuine* in our Prayers (not Hypocritical)
3. We MUST pray about the Issues that matter to God (God's Will)
4. We MUST pray so that God alone is glorified

... and the Issues or the Subjects that are *paramount* to God are what Jesus taught here in verses 9-13, when He said:

Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]'

And based on what Jesus taught here- we can say that we are NOT to merely *memorize* these words and then *repeat* them in Church. Instead, what Jesus taught in verses 9-13 are the Subjects or the Issues that matter the most to God. And so, they should matter the most to us as well. So, ...

- We are to pray about God being the Believer's heavenly Father
- We are to pray that God's Name is to be Hallowed in all we think and do and want and pray about
- We are to pray about God's Kingdom coming to this earth in fullness
- We are to pray that God's Will is done on the earth to the same extent and with the same urgency that God's Will is done in Heaven
- We are to pray about God supplying that which we need for that day
- We are to pray about the Connection of God forgiving our Sins with the Ability that we have to forgive those who have sinned against us
- We are to pray that God will NOT lead us into Temptation

- We are to pray that God will deliver from the Evil one and what the Evil one has to offer us
- We are to pay that God will make us aware that we ask all of this precisely because we know and understand that the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory belongs ONLY to God alone

... and as I told you before- it is perfectly proper for us to pick one or more Parts of this “Guide” and pray about that Issue for a day or a week or a month or even a whole year! What does NOT bring God any Glory- is for us to merely *parrot* these words in Church- without actually crying out to God about the Issues themselves.

Now before I get into the main focus of my Sermon this morning- I want to *remind* you of what Prayer is all about. Over the Centuries- this wonderful Gift- this “*Means of Grace*” called, “*Prayer*” has been *co-opted* by the leaders of the visible Church- *especially* here in America- to become another “*Man-centered*” Enterprise of modern Christianity. And through Books and various Teachings- the sheep of God’s Pasture have been taught how human beings can *impose* our will on God; and how we can make *demands* on God- which, in effect, makes God to be nothing more than our own personal “*Cosmic Puppet*” or a “*Divine Tool*”- that we can *use* to get whatever our heart craves for.

And with all due respect to those who are very sincere, but who have been caught up in this perversion of Prayer- much of what is being taught about Prayer today and the way that Prayer is being exercised by far too many, who claim to be saved- is Blasphemy!

We need to understand that Prayer was God’s idea. And the main *function* of Prayer; the *end Result* of Prayer- like everything else God has given us- is about God and NOT primarily about us. So, Prayer is about God being Glorified; and about us being so transformed (by what God alone does for us) that we actually desire God’s Will MORE than we desire our own will. And that means that Prayer is NOT *ultimately* about us simply asking God for things. And that also means that Prayer is certainly NOT about us trying to change God’s Mind or twist God’s Arm behind His back- so He will give us what we *want*.

Prayer is FIRST about you and I *discovering* God’s Will. And the *primary* Way we find out what God’s Will is- is to read and study the Scriptures. But Prayer is also, *secondly*, about us being transformed- as we seek God’s Will- to the point where we begin to desire God’s Will MORE than we want our *own* will. And that takes time- because, many times, we either don’t *understand* God’s Will or we really don’t *want* it. Sadly, there are times, before we ever begin to pray- that we have *already* figured out what it is that we want from God. And so, we see Prayer as merely the “*Way*” or the “*Means*” by which we can convince God to do for us what we already want.

Now I have told you many times, that God didn't *have* to set Prayer up like this- but the Bible teaches that He did. And this Way with Prayer is *irrevocable*. In other words, God will NOT move any other Way- until Jesus comes back. So, what is Prayer about? Prayer is about these five things:

1. God desires to do certain things in the earth
2. God has chosen to do those things- ONLY in *response* to answering the Prayers of His people
3. So, we are to pray that God will do- that which He has already said He wants to do
4. If God's people do NOT pray- God will NOT move- even though it is His Will to do those things
5. But because it IS God's Will to do those things- God will *assure* that His people pray to that End

... which is what I call, the "*Pattern of Prayer*". And THAT is *why* Jesus gave us this Model that we call, the "*Lord's Prayer*".

Now I realize that, if you have never heard anyone say these things before- what I'm teaching about Prayer may sound strange to you. And so, last time- we went over a very important Passage in **Daniel 9**- that *proves* that what I am teaching here about the "*Pattern of Prayer*" is true. So, if you weren't here last time- you might want to get a copy of that Sermon.

I have already gone into great detail about the various Issues or Subjects that Jesus told us to pray about- so, today I want to focus on what Jesus taught in verses 14&15 when He said,

14 "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

15 But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

Now this Portion of what we call the "*Lord's Prayer*" has to do with the twins Issues of:

1. Forgiveness
2. Unforgiveness

... which are very important to God. And so, they should become very important to us as well.

And Jesus Himself tied in God's Forgiveness of *our* Sins against Him with *our* Forgiveness of those who sin against us when He taught this in **Matthew 6:12:**

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

... which is a part of the "Pattern of Prayer" we are to develop in our own Lives.

And the key phrase in verse 12 is: "**as we also have**"- which means: "*to the same extent*"; or "*in the same way*". So, we are to pay to God that He will forgive the Sins we have committed against Him- **TO THE SAME EXTENT**; or "**IN THE SAME WAY** that we forgive the Sins that others have committed against us. In other words, we are asking God to **NOT** forgive *us*- **UNLESS** we forgive *others*!

And then, Jesus elaborated on this Issue by what He taught in verses 14&15:

For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

So, *how* are we to understand this? Well, to begin with- I would suppose that the spirit of "*Unforgiveness*"; our *unwillingness* to forgive those who sin against us- is probably one of the most *common* Sins that plague God's people. So, *most* people, who sit on the pews of the modern American Church are familiar with the Struggle to forgive other people. But as I previously told you- we are never more like God- than when we forgive those who have genuinely sinned against us. And we are never more like satan when we don't.

Now, in Context, Jesus was exposing yet another glaring absence of genuine Salvation and Holiness in the normal daily Life of the Scribes and Pharisees and other religious Leaders in Israel during the 1st Century. These men, who held themselves out as being **THE** most godly men on earth, were the very **WORST** kind of Sinner- because, according to Jesus- these men were "*religious Hypocrites*". And one of the most grievous Sins that were committed by the Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Zealots was their almost complete *Inability* and *Unwillingness* to forgive *anyone* who they had sensed crossed them- in any way. And the crowd that sat and listened to Jesus' Sermon that day- knew full well that Jesus was *specifically* referring to these unsaved Jewish Leaders.

And the Apostle Matthew, who wrote this Gospel Record *initially* to his Jewish brethren was *especially* keen on exposing these Frauds- so that his kinsmen would **NOT** be deceived by them. So, Matthew quoted Jesus, *more than any other biblical writer*, in calling these men, "**Hypocrites**" (**Matthew 6:2, 5, 16; 15:17; 22:18; 23:13-15, 23, 25, 27, & 29**).

But holding on to “*Unforgiveness*” sounds so ugly and dirty- so, Man developed words and phrases that try to “*dull the edge of the sword*” as it pertains to the Issue of Unforgiveness to make this horrible Sin to be less horrible and more acceptable, like: “*Holding a Grudge*”; or “*Not being able to let go*”. But the real Culprit here- is the ugly and dirty Sin of “Unforgiveness”. And we would do well to call it that.

Now it is evident, from reading the New Testament- that God thinks that Unforgiveness is not only a terrible Sin- but one which *causes* or *allows* several *other* Sins to exist and to flourish. And we need to get into this- if we are to understand why Jesus *elevated* this Sin like He did. And, of course, here, Jesus said that our Ability to be forgiven by God hinges on whether we are willing to forgive those who have genuinely sinned against us. So, we really need to examine this Issue.

It is also evident, from reading the New Testament, that God *expects* us to forgive. He *demand*s that we forgive. God commands His people to forgive. And our gracious God has one of the most frightening Punishments in mind for those who will not forgive others, that Jesus said in verse 15:

But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

There is probably not a greater Punishment than for God to refuse to forgive us. Because without the merciful and gracious Forgiveness of God- we have NO Hope. But that is *exactly* the Punishment for us holding on to Unforgiveness.

Now it should be obvious- but in case you haven't seen this yet- what Jesus is saying here- is that those who *refuse* to forgive will NOT go to Heaven- because Heaven is filled with ONLY *forgiven* people. We need to constantly remind ourselves that “Good” people do NOT go to Heaven- “forgiven” people do. So, if God *refuses* to forgive our Sins against Him (which are many)- we are doomed. So, this is a real big deal.

Now in case you have been deceived by the Heresy of “*Antinomianism*” (Lawlessness); or you know somebody who has- let me say to you- you *cannot* say, “*But I'm saved- so, it doesn't matter if I forgive or not.*” NO! You CANNOT separate the Reality of your Salvation from the Way you live your normal, daily Life. Saved people have *experienced* the Miracle of the New Birth; and they will live their lives as though that is true. The *dominating* Power of satan over their Lives has been destroyed (**1John 3:8**) and so, they are no longer cruelly “*driven*” to fulfill the Lusts of their Flesh. They now live their Lives to God's Glory- by being lovingly “led” by the Spirit of God (**Romans 8:14**).

So, the Way to understand this- is to say, “*If you were saved- you would have a new, divine Nature- which would empower you to forgive.*” In other words, Jesus is teaching here what real Salvation looks like in the Lives of every-day, normal Believers.

Now keep in mind that the religious Hypocrites of Jesus’ Day (*the Scribes, Pharisees; Sadducees; Essenes; and Zealots*) WERE deceived about themselves. And they thought; and they said; they believed; and they taught that, because of “*who they were*” (supposedly Abraham’s Children)- that it didn’t matter how they lived their Lives. So, they honestly thought they were free to live utterly grotesque Lives- filled with blatant Sin and Corruption- and still be in “*Right Standing*” with God.

But from Chapter 5 all the Way to Chapter 7- in what we call, the “*Sermon on the Mount*”- Jesus teaches that these people were deceived about their Relationship with God- because all of the Issues that Jesus raises in this “Sermon”; all of the Attributes and Characteristics and Actions- have to do with the every-day normal Behavior of these religious Frauds.

So, in this Sermon, Jesus is teaching what the Attributes and Characteristics of the *new* “people of God”; who are part of the *New Covenant*; who will inherit this *new* “*Kingdom of Heaven*”- are. And those who do not measure up to the Standards that Jesus raises in this Sermon will NOT be a part of God’s Kingdom- precisely because they are proving, beyond a shadow of a doubt, by the “bad Fruit” of their Lives- that they are NOT “*Abraham’s Children*” (**John 8:38-59**). And that is *why* Jesus said this in **Matthew 5:20**:

For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

... and so, *everything* in this Sermon (**Matthew 5-7**)- *including* what Jesus is teaching here about Prayer- is about what that “surpassing Righteousness” looks like.

So, while these religious Leaders were absolutely “*natural Jews*”- they were NOT “*spiritual Jews*” (**Romans 2:28&29**). And while they could trace their own personal lineage back to “*Father Abraham*”- they had NEVER been a part of “*God’s Family*”; and were wholly “*Gentiles*” (*Unbelievers*) as far as Jesus was concerned. So, the “*Divine Expectation*” for us to be a people, who are eager and able to forgive- is set against the Contrast of these men, who were *unforgiving* and *unmerciful* to their Core. And that is *why* the Command for us to forgive is NOT alleviated by us simply saying, “*Well, I’m just not there, yet*”.

My dear brothers and sisters, the single greatest Risk we face as a Church in these Days is NOT that we might lose a musician; or that we might lose money; or

that we might lose Members; or even that we might lose some or all of our Reputation. No, the greatest Risk is that we may lose Heaven. Because one sure Way to lose Heaven- is for us to hold fast to an unforgiving Spirit- and thereby prove that we have never been indwelt by the Spirit of Christ for a single day.

The Lord, Who gave us some of the most beautiful and precious Promises that have ever been uttered on this earth is the SAME Lord, Who said,

14 "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

15 But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

... and then the Apostle Matthew followed that Divine Commandment up with another amazing section of Teaching in **Matthew 18** about who will be the *greatest* in the Kingdom of Heaven, when He said,

... Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:3b&4)

... so, Jesus *requires* our Belief in Him to be “*Child-like*”, right?

Well, Yes!, in one sense, but No!, in another sense. God does NOT want us to be “*Child-ish*”- in our believing- which is defined as being “*Self-centered*” and “*Immature*”. What Jesus wants in us- is Child-like TRUST; Child-like DEPENDENCE; and a Child-like EMBRACING and ACCEPTANCE of what our Lord has said. And that “*Child-likeness*” is to be so, all-compassing; so, pervasive- that it allows NO *stumbling*; NO *tripping*; NO *offense* over the Simplicity; and Beauty; and Power of this “*Child-like Faith*”. And that can be measured by what Jesus said in verses 8&9:

8 "If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire.

9 If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell.

And on the Heels of this amazing Teaching about the “Child-likeness” of our Faith and the Simplicity and the Power of our Submission and Allegiance to Jesus- Peter asked a very important Question:

Matthew 18:21b

... Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?

... and Jesus responded with this even more amazing Statement:

Matthew 18:22b

... I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

... linking the kind of “Child-like” Faith He was talking about with the Power and Desire to Forgive.

Now I pray we can all agree that Jesus was NOT teaching that we MUST extend Forgiveness for the first 490 times our Brother sins against us- but after that- we are then free to NOT forgive. But how do I know this to be true? Because of the Parable Jesus gave beginning in the very next verse:

Matthew 18:23-35

23 "For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves.

24 When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him.

25 But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made.

26 So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.'

27 And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt.

28 But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.'

29 So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.'

30 But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed.

31 So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened.

32 Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.

33 Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?'

34 And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him.

35 My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."

The Point here is clear- those who will inherit this new "*Kingdom of Heaven*" are those who recognize three unarguable Truths about Sin and Forgiveness:

1. Our Sins against God are far *greater* in number and infinitely *more*- Evil in Reality than *any* Sin that *anyone* could commit against us
2. God's Right to adjudicate the "Crimes" we have committed against His Holiness (by our Sins) is far *greater* and infinitely more *correct* than our Right to adjudicate the "Crimes" others have committed against us
3. Our Need to receive God's Forgiveness *outweighs* our Right for those, who have committed Sins against us- to be held to a specific Account of our choosing

... and the Statement by our sinless Savior in **Matthew 18:34&35** should terrify us:

34 And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him.

35 My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."

The point of both **Matthew 6:15** and **18:34&35** is that if we hold fast to an "Unforgiving Spirit", we will be "**handed over to the torturers**". And that is simply another way of saying,

By refusing to forgive- we are proving that we are deceived about whatever Salvation Experience we are clinging to- and we have NEVER actually experienced the Miracle of the New Birth. And, unless we repent and believe the Gospel- we will NOT inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.

Now it is very important to understand that we do NOT *earn* Forgiveness for our Sins from God by forgiving those who have sinned against us- even though that is *exactly* what it looks like Jesus is saying here. We NEVER *earn* ANYTHING from God. We NEVER *deserve* ANYTHING from God. We are NEVER *entitled* to receive ANYTHING from God. And God is NEVER *obligated* to do ANYTHING for us.

Forgiveness from God- *like everything else from God*- is given to us for one Reason: *The Desire of God*. And this “*Divine Desire*” is expressed in several different ways:

- Because God *wants* to
- Because God *chooses* to
- Because God takes *Pleasure* in doing so
- Because God is *glorified* by doing so
- Because of God’s Own personal Prerogative

Because NOBODY *forces* God’s Hand. NOBODY *coerces* God to do anything. NOBODY “*paints God into a Corner*” where He HAS to do certain things. No, God is ALWAYS *totally “Free”*; and *totally “Autonomous”*. God ONLY does what He WANTS to do. And that means that God is the ONLY truly “Free” being in the Universe. And it also means that God is the *happiest* Being in the Universe- because God ALWAYS gets EVERYTHING He wants. God is NEVER frustrated; He is NEVER denied; and He is NEVER defeated. And this is true- even pertaining to the Evil Deeds of wicked Men.

God NEVER *forces* anyone to commit Sin. He never *causes* people to do Evil. But God *allows* Evil- but only to the extent- that by allowing Evil (to a certain extent)- a *greater* Good will come forth- that would NOT have come forth- had God not allowed the Evil to exist. So, even when it *appears* that satan is winning; or that Evil is triumphing in the earth- God is ALWAYS in complete Control! And His WILL is ALWAYS done! Which is Why Jesus told us to pray to that extent.

So, while it is true that we CANNOT earn Heaven or merit (deserve) Heaven by forgiving others- it is also true that by us holding fast to an “Unforgiving Spirit” we are proving that we do not trust in Jesus Christ. Because if we trusted in Him; if we honestly believed in Who Jesus really is- we would NEVER spurn His “Way of Life”. If we *genuinely* trusted Jesus- we would not be able (or willing) to take Forgiveness from His Hand for the “trillion- dollar Debt” we owe to Him and withhold it from the “ten cent Debtor” who owes us.

In other words, by holding the pittance of Debt that somebody owes to us (because of their Sins)- we are testifying that we either believe that Jesus *owes* us Forgiveness; or we *don't* believe that our Debt to Jesus (because of our Sins) is that big of a deal. And both of these wayward Beliefs prove that we really don't understand the Gospel very well.

Sooner or later, we must ALL admit one humiliating Truth: We DESERVE Hell. We have EARNED God's Wrath. We are ENTITLED to but one thing from God: eternal Damnation! The ONLY thing we bring to the Table as it pertains to Salvation- is the Sin that made the Life, Death; and Resurrection of Jesus *necessary*. So, everything we get in this Life besides an Eternity in Hell- is the MERCY of God! And that Truth should humble us.

So, what stands out in our unwillingness to forgive- is the exact *opposite* of the "Child-like" Faith that Jesus said was a Requirement for Salvation. What we see in our Unforgiveness toward others- is an Arrogance; and a Self-righteousness; and a terrible display of sinful Pride- which might really be the *main* Problem.

Now, I am NOT saying that all we have to do is to push a button and we will instantly begin to forgive. Sometimes Forgiveness is a Process. We have to work to forgive; strive to forgive. But what I AM saying is that Forgiveness MUST be the Goal. So, whatever Process you are engaged in; whatever Labor or Work you are expending toward Forgiveness- make sure that the Goal is genuine Forgiveness and NEVER to justify Unforgiveness.

So, just what is "*Forgiveness*"? What does it look like? And what is it NOT? We have heard from Jesus- that Forgiveness is *Essential*. It is NOT merely icing on the cake of Christianity. If we don't experience it; if we don't offer it to others, we will perish in our Sin. So, it is tremendously important to know what this is- that is so essential to our Eternal Life.

So, please allow me to begin with a definition of Forgiveness that we owe to each other. And it comes from one of the Puritans, by the name of Thomas Watson. And Brother Watson wrote a book in 1692- called, the "*Body of Divinity*" where he comments on the "*Lord's Prayer*", where Jesus told us to pray, "**forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors,**" and Watson asked, **Question:** When do we forgive others?

Answer: When we strive against all thoughts of revenge; when we will not do our enemies mischief, but wish well to them, grieve at their calamities, pray for them, seek reconciliation with them, and show ourselves ready on all occasions to relieve them.¹

¹Thomas Watson, *Body of Divinity*, p. 581

... and I think this is a very biblical Definition of Forgiveness- because each of its Parts comes from a Passage of Scripture:

“Resist thoughts of Revenge”: **Romans 12:19: Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.**

Don't seek to do them Mischief: **1Thessalonians 5:15: See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.**

“Wish Well to them”: **Luke 6:28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.**

“Grieve at their Calamities”: **Proverbs 24:17: Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, And do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles;**

“Pray for them”: **Matthew 5:44: But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,**

“Seek Reconciliation with them”: **Romans 12:18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.**

“Be always willing to come to their Relief”: **Exodus 23:4: If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey wandering away, you shall surely return it to him.**

... so, according to this “man of God”- this is what Forgiveness looks like:

- Resisting Revenge
- Not returning Evil for Evil
- Wishing them Well
- Grieving at their Calamities
- Praying for their Welfare
- Seeking Reconciliation so far as it depends on you
- Coming to their Aid in Distress

... all of these Attributes points to a *forgiving* Heart. And the Heart here is all important because Jesus said in **Matthew 18:35:**

My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not

forgive his brother from your heart.

... and so, I think we now have a pretty good idea of what Forgiveness is. And, Lord willing, next time, I will get into what Forgiveness is NOT.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.