**KINGDOM PRINCIBLE #3 FORGIVENESS**

On Monday morning, October 2, 2006, a gunman entered a one-room Amish school in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania. In front of twenty-five horrified pupils, thirty-two-year-old Charles Roberts ordered the boys and the teacher to leave. After tying the legs of the ten remaining girls, Roberts prepared to shoot them execution style with an automatic rifle. The oldest hostage, a thirteen-year-old, begged Roberts to "shoot me first and let the little ones go." Refusing her offer, he opened fire on all of them, killing five and leaving the others critically wounded. He then shot himself as police stormed the building.

But what differentiated this school shooting from the many others that we have unfortunately witnessed recently was the reaction of the community. The Amish community forgave the gunman and embraced his family. They attended Roberts’ funeral, offered help to his family and even channeled money to them.

 **God owns the title deed to forgiveness. What is forgiveness to Him?**

Ephesians 4:32 “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted; forgiving one another; even as God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven you.”;

**Definition of Forgiveness**

Pardon. To give up the wish to punish or retaliate. Not to have hard feelings at or towards.

**The Ultimate Proof of Total Forgiveness** takes place when we sincerely petition the Father to let those who have hurt us off the hook--- even if they have hurt not only us, but also those close to us. “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” Luke 23:34

**What Total Forgiveness IS**

1. **Being aware of what someone has done and still forgiving them**

Total forgiveness is not being oblivious to what an offender did; it is not covering up, excusing, or refusing to acknowledge what happened. That would be living in denial. Some people choose to live in denial as a way of dealing with pain; this happens during the time of grief when a loved one dies. But sooner or later the grieving person must come to terms with reality. I believe repression is almost never a good thing.

It is no spiritual victory to think we are forgiving people when we are only avoiding facing up to their wrong behavior. I believe is just evading true forgiveness. We are saying to ourselves, “ I want to forgive them, but I don’t think I really could if they actually did what it seem they did.” So we postpone recognizing the true offense in order to keep from experiencing the pain, and we let them carry on as though nothing happened. Total forgiveness is achieved only when we acknowledge what was done without any denial or covering up--- and still refuse to make the offender pay for their crime. Total forgiveness is painful. It hurts when we kiss revenge good-bye.

1. **Choosing to keep no record of wrongs**

Love “keeps no record of wrongs” (pertaining to love) It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 1Cor. 13:5

Why do we keep track of the times we are offended? To use them. To prove what happened. To wave them before someone who doubts what actually happened.

A husband may say to his wife in a moment of anger, “I’ll remember that.” And he does! She may say to him, I’ll will never forget this.” And she doesn’t!

Love is a choice. Total forgiveness is a choice. It is not a feeling---not at first is an act of will. It is the choice to tear up the record of wrongs we have been keeping.

1. **Refusing to punish**

Refusing to punish those who deserve it, giving up the natural desire to see them “get what’s coming to them” --- is the essence of total forgiveness. Our human nature cannot bear the thought that someone who hurt us deeply would get away with what they have done. It seems so unfair! We want vengeance—their just punishment. But the fear that they won’t get punished is the opposite of perfect love.

It is important that we examine ourselves in this area. We must ask, “How much of what I am about to say or do is just an attempt to punish?” if punishment is our motive, we are about to grieve the Holy Spirit.

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. 1 John 4:18

1. **Not telling what they did**

There is often a need to talk to someone about how you have been hurt, and this can be therapeutic if it is done with the right-hearted attitude. If this is necessary, you should choose the person you tell very carefully, making sure that person is trustworthy and will never repeat your situation to those it does not concern. Anyone who truly forgives, does not gossip about his or her offender.

1. **Being Merciful**

**“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” (matt.5:7)**.

The Bible says basically two things about God:

* He is merciful
* He is just

The heart of the gospel is related to these two characteristics. Because He is merciful, God does not want to punish us; because He is just, He must punish us because we have sinned against Him.

When it comes to being merciful, this is our Lord’s command: In the Greek language, mercy is the opposite of wrath or justice. One difference between grace and mercy is that grace is getting what we don’t deserve (favor), and mercy is not getting what we do deserve (justice). When we show mercy, we are withholding justice from those who have injured us, and that is one aspect of godliness.

There is a fringe benefit for those of us who show mercy: we also be shown mercy (matt. 5:7). This shows that total forgiveness is not devoid of self-interest. “The merciful man doeth good to his own soul” (Prov. 11:17).

1. **Graciousness**

True forgiveness shows grace and mercy at the same time. There is an interesting Greek word, epieikes, that means “forbearance” or “tolerance.” It comes from a root word that means the opposite of being unduly rigorous. In Hellenistic Literature, Aristotle contrasted it with severely judging. The idea was: do not make a rigorous stand against your enemy even when you are clearly in the right.

Graciousness is shown by what you don’t say, even if what you could say would be true. Self-righteous people find it almost impossible to be gracious; they claim always to be after “the truth,” no matter the cost. Total forgiveness sometimes means overlooking what you perceive to be the truth and not letting on about anything that could damage another person.

1. **It is an inner condition**

Total forgiveness must take place in the heart, or it is worthless, for “out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matt.12:34). If we have not truly forgiven those who hurt us in our hearts, it will come out---sooner or later. But if it has taken place in the heart, our words will show it. When there is bitterness, it will eventually manifest itself; when there is love, “there is nothing in him to make him stumble” (1 John 2:10).

Confidence toward God is ultimately what total forgiveness is all about; He is the One I want to please at the end od the day. He cares and knows whether I have truly and totally forgiven, and when I know I have His love and approval, I am on very happy and contented servant of Christ.

1. **It is the absence of bitterness**

Bitterness is an inward condition. It is an excessive desire for vengeance that comes from deep resentment. It heads the list of the things that grieve the Spirit of God. **“**And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30).

It became Esau’s preoccupation. “Now Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him, and Esau said to himself, “The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob.” (Genesis 27:41).

Bitterness is one of the most causes of people missing the grace od God. “See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many” (Heb. 12:15). Bitterness will manifest itself in many ways---losing your temper, high blood pressure, irritability, sleeplessness, obsession with getting even, depression, isolation, a constant negative perspective, etc.

We must begin to get rid of a bitter and unforgiving spirit; otherwise, the attempt to forgive will fail. The absence of bitterness allows the Holy Spirit to be Himself in us. This means that I will become like Jesus. When the Spirit is grieved, I am left to myself, and I will struggle with emotions ranging from anger to fear.

When the Holy Spirit is not grieved, He is at home with me; He will begin to change me into the person He wants me to be, and I will be able to manifest the gentleness of the Spirit. Relinquishing bitterness is an open invitation for the Holy Spirit to give you His peace, His joy, and the knowledge of His will.

1. **Forgiving God**

We often do not see it at first---and for some it takes a long time---all of our bitterness is ultimately traceable to a resentment of God. This maybe and unconscious anger. Some good people would be horrified at the thought that they could be harboring bitterness toward God. But we often repress this, too; such knowledge is too painful to admit.

The truth is, our bitterness is often aimed at God. Why do we feel this way? Because deep in our hearts we believe that He is the one who allowed bad things to happen in our lives. Since He is all-powerful and all-knowing, couldn’t He have prevented tragedies and offenses from happening?

He has allowed us to suffer when we didn’t do anything, or so it seems, to warrant such ill treatment. What we ultimately believe is that God is to blame for our hurt. I believe no one knows the full answer to the question. Why does God allow evil and suffering to continue when He has the power to stop. There is a partial answer; He does so in order that we may believe.

There would be no need for faith if we knew the answer concerning the origin of evil and the reason for suffering. I only know that it is what makes faith possible.

1. **Forgiving ourselves**

Total forgiveness, then, means forgiving people---totally---and also forgiving God. But it also must include total forgiveness of ourselves.

One common complaint every church leader hears is this: “I know God forgives me, but I just can’t seem to forgive myself.”

There is no lasting joy in forgiveness if it doesn’t include forgiving yourself. It is anything but total forgiveness if we forgive God and those who hurt us, but we are unable to forgive ourselves. It is as wrong as not forgiving others, because God loves us just as much as He lover others; He will be just as unhappy when we don’t forgive ourselves as when we hold a grudge against others.

We matter to God. He wants our lives to be filled with joy, He not only wants us to forgive ourselves, but He also wants It urgently. Total forgiveness brings such joy and satisfaction that I am almost tempted to call is a selfish enterprise.

I pray that you have been challenged and motivated to forgive those who have hurt you, to forgive the God who allowed it to happen, and to forgive yourself---totally.

**Forgiveness is a Personality of God**

Psalms 103:3 “Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thine diseases.

One of the most important qualities or attributes that God has is his ability to forgive and forget. He created us and He loves us. He longs to fellowship with us. True love breeds forgiveness and forgiveness binds together with love.

**Forgiveness is a Promise of God**

Ephesians 1:7 “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”

Matthew 6:14 “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you.”

I John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

· First, God promises to forgive us of all of our past, present, and future sins when we accept Jesus as our Saviour.

· Secondly, God promises us forgiveness in our daily walk with Christ as we forgive others.

· Thirdly, God promises to forgive our sins and cleanse our conscious mind if we will acknowledge them to God and repent of them.

**Forgiveness is a Precept of God (or a command of God)**

Colossians 3:13 “Forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.”

God commands us to forgive others. In the Gospel According to Matthew, Jesus even commands us to forgive our enemies.

Three areas we are commanded to forgive in:

1. When someone is in error about judgment against us.

2. When someone is doing evil against us.

3. When someone is being an enemy against us.

**Forgiveness is a Process of God**

Luke 17:4 “And if any trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.”

It is God’s will that we are persistent in forgiveness. It needs to be a continual process for us. It is through the continual forgiveness of others that others can see that we belong to God. Many people will come to Christ if they SEE us forgive over and over and over again.

Forgiveness is an act of grace. The unwillingness to forgive robs people of the grace they so desperately need. The harboring of hurt and the unwillingness to forgive only makes the pain multiply.

What is grace? Grace is undeserved blessing from God given to people.

In essence, grace is getting what you need rather than what you deserve. Grace is the active expression of God’s love for humanity. Grace is what every person desperately needs and what every heart secretly longs for. Often, we fail to understand the depth of grace and gain from its embrace.

Four Facets of Grace to Understand

Grace to Live

Grace to Forgive

Grace to face your Past

Grace to face the Future

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. Luke 23:34

The Greek word for forgive has many different meanings and applies to many different situations but in the interest of time I want to focus on three that directly apply to this passage. The first meaning is to let go, let alone or to let be. The second meaning is to give up or to keep no longer. The third meaning is to disregard.

This means that everything that God has the right to hold against you, He lets go of when He forgives you. It means that God keeps those things that you have confessed against you no longer. Not only does God let go of what you’ve done but He also disregards it and no longer remembers it. This is what it means to experience the forgiveness of God the Father.

If you only forgive when someone asks, you completely miss the point Jesus is making. Forgiveness is an act of personal will. It is a choice, and you make the choice to be either forgiving or unforgiving.

The forgiveness that Jesus gives to us and wants us to give to others means several things. When forgiveness is given the matter is no longer held against the person. The situation is no longer remembered in a negative light. The person doing the forgiving is set free from the hurt and the pain.

**Forgiveness is an experience of grace**

Forgiveness is the radical concept that God would no longer view us as strangers but as sons and daughters. Forgiveness opens the doors of heaven to humanity and gives us a glimpse of character of Christ. Forgiveness is only available through a personal experience with the risen savior.

**Forgiveness is an expression of grace**

Without grace forgiveness would be impossible. Grace makes it possible to discover God’s forgiveness and it makes it possible for people to forgive. Grace moves when we are forgiven by God and grace moves again when we extend forgiveness to others. We will never be able to extend forgiveness to others until we fully embrace the grace of God.

Grace moves us to a genuine forgiveness from Christ. Being forgiven allows us to experience the grace of God and empowered by grace. The power of grace moves us to extend forgiveness to others. Becoming more like Jesus and growing in grace means that we must be willing to forgive.

**Forgiveness is an extension of grace**

21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. Matthew 18:21-22

Peter goes to Jesus with a question on forgiveness. Peter asks about the nature of forgiveness: who, when and how many times. Peter is thinking about forgiveness through the lens of the Law and there were strict guidelines on forgiveness. The Jewish Law gave the limit of three times to forgive someone of the same sin. The view was that this was extremely fair, just and righteous. Peter asks Jesus about the number of times to forgive, he doubles it and adds one. The limitations that Peter has in mind about forgiveness are simple.

**Peter’s thinking on forgiveness**

Who: Only extend forgiveness to a brother, a fellow believer

When: Only when asked

How many times: Maximum of seven times

Jesus answers and sets a tone not of the Law but a tone of grace. Jesus responds with 77 times. In other places, the phrase is translated seventy times seven. Jesus is not setting a new limit on the number of times we should be willing to forgive. Jesus was not saying to keep a record of wrongs up to 77 times or even 490 times. The expression is one of grace. The point that Jesus is making here is that there should be no more keeping score. There should be no more holding grudges and there should be no more rationalizing unwillingness to forgive.

**Jesus’ thinking on forgiveness**

Who: Everyone, not just fellow believers

When: At all times

How many times: As many as it takes

We will never be more like Jesus than in those moments when we choose to forgive. Our character is changed when we live in a spirit of forgiveness. Our transformation is revealed by our willingness to be forgiving.

Unwillingness to forgive ruins relationships

Unwillingness to forgive removes our confidence

Unwillingness to forgive leaves us trapped in the past

Will there be days when you are unfairly treated? Absolutely

Forgive people anyway

Will there be moments when you will be tempted to strike back at people and try to get even? Absolutely

Forgive people anyway

Will there be times when bitterness seeks to rise in your heart? Absolutely

Forgive people anyway

How to Handle Forgiveness

1. Realize that hurting people will hurt

2. Release the pain

3. Remember that Jesus died for the gift of forgiveness

4. Renew the commitment to forgive

**YOU MUST TOTALLY FORGIVE THEM. UNTIL YOU TOTALLY FORGIVE THEM YOU WILL BE IN CHAINS. RELEASE THEM, AND YOU WILL BE RELEASED.**