

Forgiven

Colossians 2:13-14

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Colossians 2:11-15

In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. Amen.

Let's pray.

O Lord, we say it is well with our soul because You have taken away our sins and have forgiven us all our trespasses. We're thankful for such love, such mercy, such grace. As we consider Your word today, I pray that You would send Your Spirit to open the eyes of our understanding, that we might know what it truly means to be complete in You, to understand what it is that You have done not only in us but for us. I pray that it would affect our worship and our praise and our adoration and our lives, that we would leave this place drawn nearer to You and changed more into the likeness of Your dear Son. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Well, we're again looking at the book of Colossians, and we're looking today at verse number 13 and 14 in particular, and I want to look at the issue of forgiveness this morning and how God has made a remedy for our sins in His Son and how our debt has been paid in full. But last week, we considered spiritual circumcision, and we looked at how what God does is that He changes our heart, He changes our disposition, gives us a new heart, as it were. And we, being buried with Christ, are raised with Him through faith, and we live to the praise of Him. And we looked at this beautiful doctrine of regeneration and its effects upon our lives.

But Paul is showing us today that being complete in Christ is not just about

our regeneration. It's not just about the change of our disposition. It's not just about having and receiving a new nature. God's blessings to us in Christ Jesus, by which we have completion, go way beyond that. It goes beyond regeneration to the idea even now of our forgiveness. And it's important to recognize that because what regeneration does, it deals with the body of sin. Remember, we looked at that. It puts off the body of sin. But what forgiveness does, it deals with the sins done in the body.

You see, it's one thing to say that God has given me a new nature, and that's a wonderful truth, and I'm not undermining that for a moment. But if we all just had new natures and weren't forgiven, we would be a bunch of new creatures with guilty consciences. Because the new nature changes our disposition, but the blessings that we have in Christ go beyond that to forgiveness, which deals with our conscience, deals with our sins done in the body. And so it's important to recognize that.

And Paul goes on to explain this but not without introducing to us the idea of trespasses. Look at verse number 13 with me. It says, "And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses." And in that one verse, we have two references to trespasses. And we also have in this verse essentially the same thing that was being said in the previous verse as well but not the mention of trespasses. And this is important because trespasses are the exact things for which we need to be forgiven of. It's our trespasses. And so let's look at this together as we go on.

Paul goes on in verse 13 to first describe this state. He says that you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He describes their condition. That's a very important thing to comprehend as believers who we were in our state but even if you don't know Christ this morning, to understand who you are in your relationship toward God. And the Bible uses a word here called "dead" that we were dead. And dead is a very strong term. It implies that we were separated from the life of God.

The Bible teaches us that God is the source of all life, and all life has its source in Him, and especially eternal life. Adam lived before God in the Garden of Eden, and Adam and Eve, they lived before God. But He said, "In the day that you eat from the fruit thereof, thou shalt surely die." And Adam and Eve, they disobeyed the Lord there in the garden, and it was the day that they ate that they died. You would say, well, they were still alive; they didn't die until a few hundred years later. Well, the Bible teaches that they did die, and they died that day spiritually. That was the day in which man was separated from God. The perfect unity and harmony that man enjoyed with God in the garden was now interfered with and interrupted by sin. Sin had severed the relationship that existed between God and be-

tween man. And Isaiah picks this up in chapter number 59 and says it's your sins that have severed you from God. The hand of the Lord is not short that it cannot save; no, no, it's our sins that have separated us between Him and us. And this is where the problem lies: sin.

And so we are now in a state of spiritual deadness. Man is born into a state of deadness before God. This does not mean that man doesn't get up in the morning; you know, unbelievers do that. It doesn't mean that they don't even go and help their neighbor across the road or do other things like that. What it simply means is man is separated from God, meaning that he has no desire for God; he does not seek after God. Man seeks his own good; he seeks his own glory. His heart, as the Bible teaches us, is a heart of stone. And a heart of stone is defined as an inanimate object. What's a heart of stone? It's hardened; it's callous; it's cold. A stone, as it were, is indifferent; it's stiff. In fact, a stone, I'll go as far as to say, is incapable to respond to God except for the work of God's grace in the life. And this is exactly what the Bible teaches about our position. It teaches us about our condition that man is separated from the life of God; he is alienated from the life of God, strangers to God.

And this is important to recognize because there are many today who live in the religious world that think that they are near to God because they produce religious deeds. But never forget the words of Isaiah, who said that even your righteousnesses are as filthy rags before God. Why? Because we are all as an unclean thing. We cannot tally up the good that we have done, and we'll see that in a moment, as to recommend ourselves to God. The issue is not necessarily what we do, even though that's an issue, but it's beyond that; it's who also we are, separated from God due to our sin.

In fact, he goes on to explain more than that. He says you were dead in trespasses; we'll look at trespasses in a moment, but said dead in this uncircumcision of your flesh. Now, what does that refer to? Dead in the uncircumcision of your flesh, well, that connects very much with verse number 11, does it not? It says in verse number 11 we've been put off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. What the indication is this: that old man we used to be in Adam was an uncircumcised person, meaning it wasn't a person that was in covenant relationship with God; it was separated from God. And beyond that, it was a body that was dominated by the sins of the flesh. It hadn't yet been cut off from sin and dedicated, as it were, to God, which is all pictured in circumcision.

So the Bible teaches us that we were dead in the uncircumcision of our flesh, and this is the state of man before God. And essentially what it's referring to is this: that man before meeting God is one who is dominated by the body of sin. He is governed by his body of sin. Man always does

that which is most basic to his nature. Man will act freely in accord with his nature, and as man is dead in sin and separated from the life of God and does not have within him the divine nature, as it were, does not have within him the divine life of God, does not have within him the Holy Spirit, does not have a renewed nature, then he will always choose that which pleases him, and that which pleases him is not what pleases God. That's why it says that those who are in the flesh cannot please God, neither are they subject to the law of God, neither indeed can they be. And this is the condition of men without God. And until there is spiritual circumcision that takes place in the heart, a work of God in the soul, man will never rise to worship his Creator. And so it says here in verse number 13 that they are dead in trespasses and in sins and in the uncircumcision of their flesh. But it also says that they are dead not only in their state, but they are also dead in their sins, dead in trespasses.

Now the idea of trespasses means that there is a command of God, or there is a rule of God, or a line of God that man keeps crossing, stepping over, stepping over. And therefore, he trespasses; he steps over the boundary that God has set in His Word, over the commandments that God has given. And it describes man as a man that is dead in trespasses, meaning he is dead in the realm of trespasses. He is living, he's alive, but not to God. He is dead in the realm of trespasses. He is dominated by trespasses. As Joseph Benson says, he says this: he is under the guilt and the power of sin. The picture here is like this: here is man living in the tomb of trespasses. This is the place of his burial, as it were; this is the place of his state; this is the place where he is dominated by; this is what he's in union with; this is man in trespasses, dominated by trespasses.

Now this does not mean man is sinning as much as he can possibly sin; that is not true. We could even argue that Hitler could have been a better man than what he was. So he could have been worse than what he was, even as wicked as he was. The issue here that the Bible is teaching us is that man is totally, in all his paths, governed by his desire for trespass. Meaning even when he seeks to do something for God, there is a motive that is not pleasing to God; there is an attitude that does not magnify God. And this is what's important to recognize: this is the state and condition of men.

Let's go to Ephesians chapter 2 because it brings this out a little bit more, and it's important for us to understand this because the more we magnify sin, the more we will thank God for forgiveness. And we will see how far the Bible describes this. It explains this in Ephesians chapter 2 verses 1 to 3, what this dead in sin and trespasses looks like in the life of those who do not believe. In Ephesians chapter 2 verses 1 to 3: "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air,

the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as others."

And here it describes to us that the man who is dead in the tomb of his trespasses is not inactive; he is active, but he is active in a way that is not pleasing to God. Look what it says: you walked in verse 2 according to the course of this world; you did not follow the path of God; you followed the path of this world, the system of this world. You lived according, as it were, to the prince of the power of the air; you listened not to God but rather to the devil. The Bible describes us here before conversion as the sons of disobedience, essentially saying that disobedience was our father, meaning you can see the likeness of the father in the son, and so in one sense, disobedience was our father, and we were characterized by disobedience. This is what he is referring to in verse number 2.

Then he goes on: we also had our conduct, this is our behavior, in the lust of our flesh, that means we did what our fleshly passions desired; we fulfilled, as it were, the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as others. We were by nature under God's condemnation and by His wrath, not just by our deeds but also because of who we are in Adam.

Now this is a condition that is quite severe; this is a condition of someone who is desperately in need of rescue. And I want you to see with me in verse number 14 because not only was this our state and this our sins, but their state and their sins produced for them something that was a big problem. And I want you to see that in verse number 14. We are introduced to these words, as it is in the New King James: "the handwriting of requirements that was against us." I prefer the translation here of the ESV as it words it this way: "the record of debt with its legal demands." Okay, the handwriting refers to the certificate of our debt, as it were; it's like a document, that's the handwriting of our document, and it says here also in the New King James of requirements, that's of law, that's of the word, that's the word dogma, and what he's simply saying is this: that we had a record of debt with its legal demands.

Essentially what he's saying is this: our state led to a life of sin, and our life of sin led to a debt, a certificate or record of our debt, that while we lived in our life of sin, while we were dead in trespasses and in sins, while we walked the way we wanted to walk, God was not forgetting every deed that was done in the body, but rather there was a record of it. There was an account taken of every thought; there was an account taken of every action, of every word, of every behavior that was against God, and it was

recorded, as it were, and it was held up as a record of our debt, a massive I owe you before God.

And this record of our debts was because of or connected directly to the legal demands. You see, it's because of our violation of God's legal demands that you and I have incurred a debt. If there was no law, there would be no transgression, the Bible says, but because there is a law, therefore there is transgression. If there was no law in this land, there would be no sin, there would be no violation of the law, there would be no punishment, there would be no holding to account, but because there are laws in this land, all criminal activity, therefore, is recorded and therefore is administered punishment, etc. The difference is this: we can escape the eyes of our government and the police, but we cannot escape the eyes of God. And they examine the outward man, but God goes beyond that and sees every sin of the heart.

Their laws only deal with our outward behavior, but God's laws deal with our hearts. Jesus says, "If you look at a woman to lust after her, you commit adultery already within her heart." He says also in the same portion of scripture that if you hate your brother, you're a murderer at heart. And Jesus holds back no punches in this regard because he wants us to realize how dead we are indeed in trespasses and in sins.

And so it's important to recognize that while we were trespassing, it's not like nothing else was happening in God's accounts. It was a record, a record of debt with its legal demands that stood against us. Look what it says in that passage, verse 14: "having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us." These legal demands and this record of our debt was against us. It was contrary to us. It wasn't serving toward our peace. It wasn't serving towards a settled conscience. It wasn't serving us in a way that would help us. Rather, our sinfulness and the law stood as an accuser to us. It condemned us. It exposed us. It showed us everything that we had done wrong and made us feel the weight of our guilt and of our sin. We were under its curse.

And every time we sinned, and every time the law exposed our sin, and every time we heard the law and disobeyed the law, as it were, all it did was add one more record of debt, one more record, one more thing on that record, one more thing on that record. And so all the years of our sinning against God, as it were, has been tallied up while we were dead in trespasses and in sins.

But what has God done to remedy this problem? If you've been honest with yourself already thus far, you would realize that this is a big problem. If you just for a moment looked into the corridors of your heart, you would

realize this is a big, big problem. Not only is it a big, big problem before my conversion, but in some respects, it also still is a big, big problem now in my conversion. What has God done to deal with this? How has God done to set this aside? How is it that I can now live with a free and clear conscience before God, knowing all this about myself?

That's a very important question that we have to ask, and God answers it for us right here in this passage. And it begins with verse number 14 at the beginning, and it's an amazing word. It says, "having wiped out." Having wiped out. The word "wiped out" is the same word that is used in Revelation for the day when God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. The implication is that tears will be out of existence when we reach heaven's shores. But He says, "having wiped out and extinguished," as it were, "put out of existence." This is the idea of the word. God has erased permanently. God has obliterated. He has blotted out. He has taken away entirely. What has He taken away? The record of our debt with its legal demands.

And in most religions, they say, "Well, God just does that because God's merciful." My friend, God is holy and just and righteous. So the question we have to ask ourselves is, how did God remain just and yet be the justifier of them who believe in Jesus? How is that possible? How is it that God can just wipe that away as if it never happened? He's holy. He's just. He's righteous. He can't overlook sin.

Well, the Bible teaches us here exactly how He did that. And look what it says in the end part of verse 14, and it refers to Jesus here: "And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." You see, we just sang it: "My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought! My sin, not in part but the whole, is nailed to His cross, and I bear it no more. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, oh my soul!" You see, it was Jesus Christ who took our sin out of the way so that God could get the eraser and wipe it clean. It was Jesus Christ who said, "I come to do the will of my Father. I come to die for the sins of sinful men."

And Jesus stepped into this world as the perfect, sinless, spotless Lamb of God. And He looked at the legal demands, and He fulfilled every single one of them perfectly. He left not one expectation of God undone. Every law, every requirement, every desire that God had for us, Jesus fulfilled it perfectly. He did not fail once in His obedience. Although He was tempted and He was tested, He rose in victory. He did not fail once. And this He did for us.

He lived perfectly so that He might be a perfect sacrifice for our sins. You see, if Jesus sinned once, He would not be fit to bear other people's sins. He must die for His sins. But He did not sin in His body once. Not in His

mind, not in His soul, not in His will. He was fully submitted to the will of the Father. And what Adam failed to do, Jesus did perfectly. And as the second Adam, He entered onto the scene of the world to redeem us from our sins. To essentially go and look at those legal demands, to fulfill all those legal demands, and then to look at the sin debt of all whoever would believe in Jesus, and He would say, "That's mine, mine, mine. I'm nailing that to my cross."

In the times of Jesus, from the Roman Empire, when criminals were hanged upon the cross, they would put an inscription on the top, a superscription on the top of their heads, as it were, and that would declare to everyone who looked on what that criminal committed as a crime. And that would be nailed to the cross. Remember what happened with Pilate? They wrote, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." And the chief priest said, "No, no, don't write 'Jesus.' This is Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. Write that He said that He was the King of the Jews." Why did they say that? Because that was His crime, that He said that He was the King of the Jews. That's why the Jews wanted, as it were, to crucify Him.

Thank God on that day, it was "This is Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." But every other criminal had his crime nailed on the cross. And what the image is here is this: that there, on that day, on that crucifixion day, as it were, on that Good Friday, there on the cross of Jesus was "This is Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." But to the eyes of men, that's all they saw. But God saw something else that day. He saw our certificate of debt right there on the top. And He said, "Those crimes, although I did not commit them, I will take them. I will take the punishment for sinners. I will bear their sins upon the cross. I will have their crimes nailed to my name. I will take the certificate of debt that belongs to them and suffer and die and be buried and rise again so that my Father may take, as it were, my blood and blot out all the certificate of debt that was held against all those who believe on Jesus."

I hope you get the force of this. The certificate of debt that was ours became His. This is what the Bible means when it says, "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree." This is what the Bible means when it says, "He became sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." This is what the Bible talks about when it talks about forgiveness. Forgiveness.

And my friend, if you are here today and you are in trespasses, dead in trespasses and in sins, and you know that your life is separated from God, as it were, and that you do not love Him and worship Him, and His truth means very little to you, and you perhaps are cold and indifferent in your heart towards God, let me encourage you to recognize that your only hope

is this grace of Jesus Christ. There is forgiveness for you in the blood of Jesus Christ. That if you will repent and believe on Him who died for sinners, your sins will be blotted out today.

On that day of judgment, on the final day when all the books are open, and God, as it were, on that final day calls out your name, will He see the certificate of debt remaining there? Or would Jesus say, "No, no, I died for him. I have forgiven him. His name is clear." My friend, don't you wish to be released from the guilt of your sin? Aren't you burdened by the weight of all your past transgressions? Don't you feel the alienation of your soul between you and God? Well, there at the cross of Jesus Christ lies the answer for the forgiveness of sinners. If you would believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and trust that His blood alone can wash away your sin, you will know forgiveness today. You will experience a record that has been clean, totally wiped out. And you will know for a certainty that Jesus has nailed your sins to His own cross.

But this means so much more even for us who believe. You see, for those who do not believe on Jesus Christ, they are just there with their own debts and the holiness of God. But for we who believe in Jesus, we know that our debts have been paid and our sins have been forgiven. But this very truth, Paul wanted the Colossian believers to understand for a very important reason. Because he understands, as we should understand, that forgiveness entirely transforms our lives.

It transforms our lives first in that we have a conscience that has been cleansed of sin. We who believe in Jesus Christ know that our sins have been nailed to the cross, and therefore our consciences have been purged from the guilt of sin. You see, in the book of Hebrews, it says that there were offerings year by year that would be offered up. And it says in those offerings was always a remembrance of sin. "Oh, there we go again. I've sinned. Slay the lamb. There I go again. I've sinned. Slay the lamb. Transfer all of the sin." Every year, all the time, when offerings were made, there was a remembrance of sin.

But the Bible says that this Jesus, when He came, He perfected forever them that are sanctified. He was the one who paid for our sins once and for all. The Bible says that the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins. But Jesus Christ bore our sins once and forever and took them out of the way. He has perfected forever them that are sanctified. He has cleared the record of our debts. And beyond that, He has cleared the law with its legal demands.

You see, our consciences are guilty before God because of our relationship to the law. And the point is, if He just cleansed our consciences by His

forgiveness, but we still lived under the law, there would only be another day before we have a guilty conscience and would be in need of another sacrifice, as it were, or to go and ask for forgiveness again in such a way that we would be saved again. My friends, this is not the case. Not only did Jesus deal with our sin debt, but He dealt with the legal demands that caused our occurring of our sin debt. And He transferred us from a dispensation of law into a dispensation of grace. He transferred us into this place wherein we now live by the law of the spirit of life. As He says, "The law of the spirit of life has made me free from the law of sin and death."

It was John Bunyan who said this: "Run, run, the law demands, but neither gives me feet nor hands. Far better news the gospel brings; it bids me fly and gives me wings." And what he's simply saying is this: the law tells you, "You've done this, and you've done that, and you've done that," but it doesn't give you the power to change. But the gospel not only regenerates but cleanses our conscience forevermore because we are now in Christ Jesus. And God sees us in Christ Jesus, and we no longer are under the law as a rule for our lives, but we're under the law of the spirit of God. And therefore, you and I are not under the guilt and condemnation of the law. And this is our joy. This is our comfort.

And as John Trapp said, he said, "The black lines of our sin have been crossed out with the red lines of the blood of Jesus Christ." And therefore, this record is clear. Our relationship to the law is different. We have died to the law in Christ. And beyond that, now our sins are no longer against us. You know what that simply means? That you are forgiven, have been forgiven, shall be forgiven, are now forgiven, forever forgiven. And the point is simply this: when Satan seeks to cause us to doubt our relationship to God, causes us to doubt the power of this forgiveness, you and I need to remind him about the blood of Jesus Christ. You and I need to remind ourselves about the certificate of debt and how it's been dealt with. There's no more certificate of debts that are coming, my friend. There are no more, as it were, legal demands and certificate of debts. That's not the system in which we live anymore. Yes, there are rules to be obeyed. Yes, there are standards to live to in the word of God. But my friend, we are not under the law. We are under grace. And praise God for that mercy.

And so, Christian, be encouraged that when your conscience condemns you, you need to take to the blood of Jesus Christ and remind yourself that the certificate of debt has been done away. When Satan says, "But hang on, here it is," say, "No, that's been paid for. Nailed to the cross. I bear it no more." Yes, I repent daily. Yes, we turn to God. But we don't live in guilt and condemnation anymore, for there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. This is our hope. This is our confidence as Christians. Cleansed.

But also, a fitting response is not only that we should not have a conscience guilty of sin anymore and of the debt, but my friends, we need to have a loving response to God for our forgiveness. You see, in the Bible, there was a man by the name of Simon the Pharisee, and Jesus was invited to his house. And as He was there at the house of Simon the Pharisee, the Bible says a very sinful woman came in that day. And she stood behind Jesus and she began to weep. And she wept. And then she fell on her knees, and she took, as it were, a box of fragrant ointment, an alabaster box. Very costly, the Bible says. And she broke it. And with her tears, she washed Jesus' feet. And with her hair, she wiped His feet. And there, this woman showed great love for Jesus. She anointed His feet with oil. The Bible says she even kissed Him, kissed His feet, couldn't stop kissing His feet. And Simon the Pharisee says, "Oh, if Jesus knew how sinful this woman was, He would tell her to get away from Him if He was a true prophet."

But do you know what Jesus replied to him? He said, "Therefore, I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little." Do you know what Jesus is teaching us here? It is that if you and I come to understand truly, not like the Pharisees that our sin is small, but come to understand truly that the certificate of our debt is large, that the record of our debt is great, that we are a very sinful man and a very sinful woman. As we come to the realization of this and then experience forgiveness, the natural, biblical, right response is adoration, love, and praise.

Why is she washing His feet with her hair? Why is she kissing His feet? Why is she pouring out that which is so costly to her to the Son of God? Why? Because she was forgiven much. If you're struggling in your zeal and love for Jesus Christ, you need to go back, not in the sense of condemnation, but go back to the certificate of debt, not on its own. Go back to the certificate of debt on the cross. Look at Jesus on the cross with your sins hanging there. And remember and remind yourself of the forgiveness of your great sin debt. And when you do that, you'll find yourself at Jesus's feet, showing Him affection, praising Him, adoring Him, laying down your glory (the hair is a woman's glory), pursuing Him, wanting to praise Him.

And you do it no matter whether the Pharisees are watching or not. You do it in the house of Simon the Pharisee. You do it in your own house. You do it in the church of God. You do it on the streets. You will praise the Son of God because He has borne your sins upon Himself. And you will say, "I've been forgiven much." And that should be the response of us Christians. Where is our alabaster box? Where is our bending of our knees? Where is our kissing, as it were, of the Son of God in our worship and our praise?

And finally, as was read today by Brother Steve, is that the forgiveness that we have received should not only give us a cleansing of our conscience, should not only cause us to be loving towards God, but it should cause us to live a life of forgiveness toward others. The parable that was read, Peter says, "Lord, should I forgive my brother seven times in a day?" He said, "Till seventy times seven." An infinite number of forgiveness belongs to God's people. Why? And He gives an example of this man that had a great, great debt that couldn't pay it. And the king said, "Pay it now." He said, "I can't pay it." Well, the king said, "If you can't pay this debt, I'm going to sell you. Your wife and your children will be mine, and you'll be gone forever." He said, "Please have mercy on me. Please have patience with me." And the king said, "Fine." He had compassion. He saw his state. He saw his condition. And he had mercy on him.

But that same man that was forgiven left where he was and found a servant that he had that owed him some money. And he said, "Pay me the last dollar, every bit of it." And the man said, "I can't. Please be patient with me. I can't pay you. I'll pay you all, but just I can't do it right now." And this man did not show him mercy. He did not show him forgiveness. He tried to exact every last dollar and put him in prison and made him suffer. And when the king found out that that man did that to his servant after having been forgiven so much, he came, as it were, and punished that man who did those things. What is the lesson?

The lesson is this: that we who have been forgiven so much should be the ones who can so easily forgive others. You see, the problem, my friends, is that we hold grudges against others and have bitterness in our heart for past offenses because we have not yet experienced or neither have we seen fully and properly the forgiveness that we have received. We exact payments from those that owe us things, as it were. We press and say, "No, I deserve this. I receive, I should have justice. I mean, this person has done me wrong," and we fight for our rights and we press for these things because we deserve better.

But the Christian should be the one who remembers this: that if I receive justice for my record of debts, I would have perished long ago. That if I receive justice for what I have done, I should not be standing here today. If I have received justice for what I have done, I should have perished in the pits of hell this very moment. The ground should open under me, and I should be swallowed up at once. But we have received mercy. And therefore, the parable teaches us, as you there have received mercy, so be you merciful, so be you merciful even as your heavenly Father is also merciful.

And that comes to us in many ways, brethren. We should be merciful in our homes. How many times has a husband and a wife quarrel and fight and

say, "Well, you did this to me last week, and now you owe me this, and I did this to you last week," and the husband's like, "No, now you owe me this, and you know what, things aren't going to be good in this home, and I'm going to punish you until you come in line. I deserve better." Harshness towards our children, harshness towards our spouses, harshness in the church of God where we hold offenses to one another when somebody says something the wrong way or looks at you the wrong way. Harshness in our society and bitterness in our society as we're in our workplaces, that we get angry and frustrated with our bosses insomuch that we want to repay them and give revenge.

My friends, the Bible says that we should not resist evil, as it were, but rather we should be a people that turn the other cheek. This is the Christian message. This is the example of Jesus. The merciful are the ones that are gentle. The merciful are the ones that are kind. The merciful are the ones that do not seek revenge. But you may say, "But they have hurt me." My friends, did not your sins and your trespasses wound and bruise the Son of God? "But you don't understand, they've hurt me." Did not your sins wound and bruise the Son of God? At least we've done wrong to someone else, so if something comes back our way, we probably deserve it anyway.

But Jesus, who did nothing wrong, bearing our sins, taking our punishment, taking the record of our debt away, surely, surely this should motivate us to be a people of mercy, to be a people of mercy and of love and of forgiveness. So my charge to you this morning is: forgive those that have wronged you. Even now, in your hearts, forgive those that have wronged you. And never forget the words of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4: "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you." What a record of debt cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Let us pray.