“Offering Grace”, Good News About Grace, Part 6 of 7 – February 16, 2014 at SBC

 Matthew 10:8

We've been looking, for several weeks, at the grace of God, the Good news, of God's grace. Today, we want to look at, . . . Offering Grace. God didn't just, . . . intend for you, to receive it. He wants you, . . to pass it on. If you have been blessed by God, . . . He wants you, to bless others. If you have been, cared for, by God, . . . He wants you, . . . to care, for others. If you've been, forgiven by God, . . . He wants you, to forgive others.

Matthew 10:8 – *"Give as freely, . . . as you have received."* Whatever, you've been given, by God, . . . you are to, . . . offer to others. This morning, we want to think in particular, . . . about forgiveness, . . . because, we've received that, . . . more than anything else. How do we, . . . give forgiveness, . . . to other people?

There's a lot of shoddy thinking, today, . . . about forgiveness, a lot of myths, a lot of misconceptions. When it comes to forgiveness, . . . some people, water it down. In fact, in our society, we're seeing an epidemic, of this.

And, it's making forgiveness, . . apply to anything, and everything, so much, . . that forgiveness, means nothing. It's almost as if, we're afraid, that somebody somewhere, might feel guilty, for one second, so we just go around saying, . . . everybody's forgiven, all the time, anywhere, . . . and, everywhere.

Today, we want to look at, . . what is, . . really, forgiveness? What is it? Before, we do that, I want us to take, a little test. Four questions, right or wrong, true or false. This is not a thing, you're going to be graded on. Write down, true or false, . . . what you believe, . . . about these statements:

1. A person, should not be forgiven, . . . until, he asks for it. True or false.

2. Forgiveness includes, . . . minimizing the offense, and minimizing the pain, it caused. True or false

3. Forgiveness includes, . . . restoring trust, and reuniting, a relationship. True or false.

4. You haven't really forgiven, . . . until, you've forgotten, the offense. True or false.

If you were, to take the Word of God, . . and, you were to particularly, read through the Gospels, and read what Jesus said, . . about forgiveness, you would come to the conclusion, that all four of these statements, . . are false.

\*\*\* We're going to look, today, at what forgiveness, really is. But, before we can look at that, . . . we need to look at, . . . what it . . . **isn't**. The Bible says, there are four things, . . . that forgiveness, . . . is not:

**1. Forgiveness, . . . is not conditional.** In other words, . . . based on, some kind of condition. In fact, the Bible says, the exact opposite. The Bible says, that real forgiveness, genuine forgiveness, . . . is unconditional. It is not, something you earn. It is not, something you deserve. It is not, something you buy, . . . or, bargain for.

It is not, something you get, as part of a bargain, . . . if you promise, to never, do it again. It is, . . unconditional.

When you tell, the person, "I will forgive you, **if**, . . .", that's not, forgiveness. You're bargaining, not forgiving. Genuine forgiveness, . . . is unconditional. It's offered, . . . even if, it's not, . . . asked for.

When Jesus, was on the cross, . . . He prayed, *"Father, forgive them, for they know not, what they do."* At that point, nobody had asked, for forgiveness. Certainly, . . nobody, deserved it. Nobody, had bargained, or, bartered for it. It was an unconditional offer, . . . of pardon.Genuine forgiveness, . . . is unconditional.

**2. It isn't minimizing, . . . the seriousness, of the offense.** Real forgiveness, . . . is not minimizing, . . . the seriousness, of the offense. It's not saying, "It's no, big deal. It really, didn't hurt. Don't worry, about it. It didn't hurt me, . . . that bad."

The truth is, if it's worth forgiving, . . . it did, hurt you. It did cause pain, and you don't need, to minimize it, . . . because, that's not a part, . . . of forgiveness. Forgiveness, is saying, "Yes, it did hurt. Yes, it did cause pain, . . . in my life. But, I'm going to let it go. I'm not, going to hold it, . . . against you."

In the paper, there was a story, of a man, . . who killed his father, his mother, and his brother. If we were to, go to that man, and say, "We proclaim you, . . forgiven! It's no, big deal. It's not, a big issue. It's wasn't, such a bad thing." And, we minimize it. That is not, forgiveness. That's, . . insanity! It was, a big deal. So, forgiving, isn't saying, it didn't hurt, when it did, . . . or, it's no big deal, . . . when it was, a big deal.

You need to understand, that there's a difference, between, . . being wronged, and being wounded. Wounds, are unintentional. Wrongs, are intentional. You're wounded, all the time, by people, accidentally. Do people say things, that hurt you, that they didn't, mean to say? Sure. Do people do things, that hurt you, . . that they didn't, mean to do? Sure. Those, do not require, forgiveness. What they require, is acceptance, recognizing, that we live, in a fallen world, an imperfect environment, . . . people are going to hurt you, many times, unintentionally.

Forgiveness, needs to be reserved, . . for the big stuff, for the serious things, for the things, that are intentionally hurtful, people mean you harm -- that's what, you reserve, forgiveness for. Let's say, . . . you don't like, . . . the way I dress. And, maybe the way I dress, . . . offends your, fashion sensibilities. I don't need, . . your forgiveness. I just need, . . . your acceptance.

On the other hand, if someone hurts you intentionally, you've been seriously wronged, . . . that's, what you need, to forgive. Whenever, you minimize, a wrong, and say, "It's no, big deal!", . . you cheapen, forgiveness. Reserve forgiveness, . . . for the, serious things.

**3. Forgiveness is not, . . resuming a relationship, . . . without change.** Forgiveness is not, . . the same thing,

 . . . as reconciliation. They're two, . . . different issues. Forgiveness, is not the same thing, as rebuilding, or, restoring, . . . a relationship. Forgiveness is instant, . . . but, trust, has to be, rebuilt, . . . over time.

There's a big difference, between forgiving a person, and trusting a person. Forgiveness, simply takes care of, the damage, it's letting the person off the hook. But, it does not guarantee, that the future relationship, . . is going to be right. Those are, . . . other issues. It takes, more than forgiveness, . . . for reconciliation.

\* Three, other things. If you want to have, a restored relationship, with someone, . . first comes, forgiveness -- that's, your part, if you've been hurt. But, on their part, it takes, 3 other things: 1) repentance, demonstrating genuine repentance; 2) restitution, where and when, possible; 3) rebuilding trust. Rebuilding trust, takes time.

In a relationship, that has been harmed, or damaged, . . . if you've been hurt, . . . forgiveness is the part, you do. But, they have to show, some other things, . . . to show, that repentance, and restoration, has taken place.

For instance, if you have been in a relationship, . . . where you were married, to an alcoholic, abusive spouse, . . and, they really hurt you, repeatedly, over and over, . . . and, that person, comes home, and says, . . . "I'm sorry, will you forgive me," . . . you say, "Yes, I forgive you", because, God commands you, to forgive.

Forgiveness, . . . is instant. But, if they say, "Now, will you let me, back in the house", . . . you say, "That's, . . . a different issue. We need to have, some progress, here, . . . first. You need to get, . . . some counseling. You need to develop, a track record, . . . to show, there's some, . . . genuine change."

While forgiveness, is based on grace, . . trust, . . . is earned. Big difference. If somebody offends you, over and over, and repeatedly, in the same way, continues to hurt you, you are called by God, to repeatedly, forgive them, . . over and over. But, you are not obligated, to instantly, trust them, and act like, everything's fine, . . and, they can come home, and things go on, as they have, in the past. It isn't resuming, a relationship, . . . without change.

**4. Real forgiveness, . . . is not forgetting, . . . what happened.** Some of you, have a hard time with this, . . . a hard time, forgiving, . . . because, you think, "I can never forget it, and if I forgive, I'll have to, start the relationship, again." No, that's not true. Forgiveness is not, . . . forgetting, . . . what happened.

I know you've heard this cliché, because, it's very popular, in America – “forgive and forget.” There's only, . . . one problem, with that. You can't, do it. It doesn't, work. It's impossible, for you to, forget everything, that's happened. The more painful something is, . . . the less likely it is, . . that, you're going to forget it.

Think about, the logic of it. It is impossible, to try, . . . to forget something. "Have you, forgotten it?" -- "I'm trying!" The whole time you're trying, . . . what are you focusing on? What, you can't . . . forget. You cannot forget something, by trying to forget it. It doesn't work, that way. The only way, . . . you forget something, . . . is by replacing it, with something else.

Scientists have proven, that your brain, is like a giant warehouse, . . . filled with thousands and thousands of file cabinets, . . . and, you never really, . . . forget anything. The more important, an event is, in your life, . . the more likely it is, . . . you remember it. You may block, . . . some things out.

Some of you think, that's the ultimate, . . . of Christian maturity. When am I going to get to the point, . . . that, I'm so grown up, in Christ, . . . that I forget, the painful things, . . . in my life? When am I going to be so mature, that I forget the things, I feel guilty over, . . . and, the things, that other people, have done to me? The truth is, . . . you may never, . . . forget them.

But, there's something better, . . . than forgetting. Remembering, . . . but, not feeling, the pain. Remember, but, seeing how God worked in it, anyway. Remembering, and seeing how God, brought good, out of bad, . . how you grew in character, . . . how it made you sensitive, . . . to the hurts and needs, of other people, . . how it changed the direction, at a crucial point in your life, . . . how things you have today, would have not happened, . . . if it hadn't been, . . . for that event.

There's something, far better, than forgetting. It's remembering, and realizing, the sovereign grace of God, . . is working, as in Romans 8:28 – *". . . all things, together, for good."* That's, even better. Because, when I forget something, . . . I don't thank God, or praise God. When I remember something, and I remember, what God has done, in spite of that, . . . then, I really thank God, . . . and, I praise God.

**\*\*\*\* WHAT IS REAL FORGIVENESS?** The Bible says, real forgiveness, . . . is four things:

**1. REMEMBERING, . . . HOW MUCH, I'VE BEEN FORGIVEN.** Remembering how much, I've already been forgiven, . . how much grace, I've received, from Christ. Eph. 4:32 – *"Be kind and compassionate, to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you."*

You're not forgiven, because, you earned it. You're not forgiven, because, you deserved it. You're not forgiven, because you've promised, never to sin, again. You're forgiven, . . because, you've put your faith, in Christ. This is the starting point, for genuine forgiveness. If you don't feel forgiven, you don't want to forgive, anybody else. You don't want them, to feel it, that's for sure. If you're hard on yourself, . . . you're going to be hard, on others.

But, the more grace, you receive from God, . . . the more gracious, you're going to be, . . . to others. The more forgiven, you feel by God, . . . the more forgiving, you're going to tend, . . . to be, toward others.

One day a harlot, came to Jesus, . . . and, in front of a bunch of other leaders, . . took a very expensive alabaster box of perfume, . . . and, she broke it, . . . and, washed Jesus' feet, . . . with this, very expensive perfume. They only, wore sandals, in those days. The religious leaders, . . . were incensed, by this.

They said, first, look who's doing this -- this woman, of ill repute. And number two, she could have taken, that box, sold the perfume for money, . . . and, given the money, to the poor.

Jesus rebuked, the religious leaders. He said, "Lighten up! She has been forgiven, much, . . . so, she's giving the most love. She'll be remembered, from this day forward, because, of her actions." It was an act, . . . of worship. Because, she felt so graced by Christ, . . . she was being, . . . gracious. It starts with, remembering how much, I've been forgiven. All of us, have been forgiven, a lot.

**2. RELINQUISHING, . . . MY RIGHT, TO GET EVEN**. That's the heart, . . . of genuine forgiveness -- relinquishing my right, to get even. Romans 12:19 – *"Never, avenge yourselves. Leave that to God, for He has said, that He will repay those, who deserve it."* Notice, He says, . . . don't try, to get even, . . . don't try to retaliate, . . . don't seek revenge. Leave that, . . . up to God.

You say, "If I forgive them, . . that means, I give up all my right, to get even." That's exactly, what forgiveness is. You give up your right, . . to get even. You absorb the pain, yourself, . . without, having to retaliate.

"But, that's unfair!" Who said, . . . forgiveness, is fair? There's a word, for fairness. It's called, justice. Justice, is fair. Forgiveness, . . is grace. You don't deserve, forgiveness. You deserve, justice. Aren't you glad, God doesn't give you, . . . everything, you deserve? None of us, would be here, . . . if that, were true.

We always want justice, . . in everybody else's life. But, we don't want it, . . in our own. God is gracious to us, and, He wants us, . . . to be gracious, to others. So, you say you give up, your right, to get even. Why?

This verse says, *"Leave that to God, for He has said, that He will repay those, who deserve it."* Life is, not fair, but, one day, . . . God's going to, settle the score. One day, God is going to, close the books. He's going to, . . balance the ledger. He's going to, even the odds. He's going to, right the wrongs, . . . that, we see.

God is the, God of justice, and He's going to even the score, one day. He says, "I'm going to even the score, so leave it, in My hands." Who can get better justice, . . . you or God? He says, "Let Me, handle it. You just relax, and in the meantime, . . . let Me fill you, with My grace, and let Me put your heart, at peace."

When you're, holding onto a hurt, . . . you're only hurting yourself. So, you relinquish the right, . . . to get even.

**3. RESPONDING, . . . TO EVIL, WITH GOOD**. Genuine forgiveness, is responding to evil, . . . with good. Luke 6:27-28 – *"Do good, to those, who hate you. Bless those, who curse you, and pray for those, who mistreat you."* How can you tell, when you've really, . . . released somebody? How can you tell, when you've genuinely, . . . forgiven them?

You can pray, for God, to bless them. When you come to the point, when you can, actually pray, "Bless, that person, . . . who hurt me," . . . you'll know forgiveness, is complete, in your heart. When you can, . . . look at their hurt, . . . and, not just your own.

Hurt people, . . hurt people. We hurt other people, . . because, we're hurting, ourselves. If somebody hurts you, it's most likely, they're hurting on the inside. When you have, genuinely forgiven a person, you can look past, the ways that they've hurt you, . . . and, see how they're hurting, . . . and, how that hurt, is part of the reason, they've chosen, to hurt you.

Out of their hurt, . . . they begin, to hurt others. When you can look at their hurt, . . you know you've, genuinely forgiven them. When you can pray, for God, to bless them, . . . when you can do good, to those that hate you, when you can bless those, who curse you, . . . you're responding to evil, . . . with good.

You say, "How could I, ever do that? That's impossible. I couldn't do that to that person, who's hurt me." You can't, . . . unless, you do one thing. Allow, the love of God, to penetrate, every fiber, of your life. Only the love of God, could cause you, to do something, like that. 1 Corinthians 13:5 – *"Love keeps, no record, of wrongs."*

That doesn't mean, you forget, the wrongs. It just means, you don't use them, . . . as ammunition. It means, you don't pull them out, and use them, to retaliate. What most of us like to do, is forgive a hurt, but we want to hold onto it too, and stockpile it. Later on, if we do something wrong, and get accused, and they say, "You did this," . . . then, we can say, "But, you did this!" The Bible says, when you do that, you're being hateful. Because, love keeps, . . . no record, of wrongs.

**4. REPEATING THE PROCESS, . . . AS LONG AS NECESSARY**. You do these things, . . over and over. Forgiveness, is not a, one shot event. How long, do you have to, keep forgiving, a person? You do it, as long as, . . . the feeling of revenge, keeps coming back. Matthew 18:21-22 – *"Peter asked, `Lord, how often, should I forgive somebody, who sins, against me? Seven times?'"* Seventy times seven.

The point is -- for infinity. For as long, as it takes. Until you, let it go. You have to keep forgiving that person, until, the pain stops, . . . and, the desire to get revenge, . . . goes away. You know you can pray, and say, "Dear Jesus, I know this bitterness, is bad for me. I know I need, to forgive them. Lord, I forgive that person," . . . and, five minutes later, you want to kill them, again. You have to, . . . say it, again.

When the memory comes back, you say it again. Again, and again. You just keep doing it, until, the pain goes away. If they really hurt you, . . . it's going to take, . . . more than once. Because, the memory, is going to keep coming back. You have to repeat the process, as long as necessary. It's got to be, continual. It's, a process.

You say, "I've forgiven them. Why do I, . . still hurt?" Because, . . it hasn't, happened yet. You've got to, keep forgiving them. Every time, you hurt, . . . you go back over it, in your mind, . . and say, "God, I forgive them, again," . . . until, you know, you've released them.

But, I must let you know, it is not always advisable, it is not always practical, it is not even always possible, . . . to go to, your offender, . . . and, tell them, you forgive them. There could be, numerous reasons. They may not even, remember the event. Or, they may never, knew it happened. They may, be dead. There are many reasons, why sometimes, you cannot go back to a person, and ask their forgiveness, in person.

What do, you do? One thing, you can do is, use the technique, of the empty chair. You imagine, that offender, sitting down in that empty chair, . . . and, then, you tell them, how it felt. "This is why, I've hated you, all these years. This is why, I resent you. This is why, I felt hurt." Pour out your heart, . . . to that chair.

Then, you say, "Because, of Jesus Christ, . . . and, because of His grace, in my own life, . . . I'm letting you go. I'm setting you free. I'm releasing you. I'm not going to bring it up, again. I'm not going to hold it, against you. Not because, you deserve it, . . . [because they don't. Forgiveness, is grace], . . . I'm doing it, . . . because Jesus says to do it, . . . and, I'm letting it go."

 Or, maybe you need to write a letter, and you need to pour out, in that letter, . . . "This is how I've hurt, all these years. And, this is how it's been, in my life. This is what has bothered me, . . . but, I'm letting it go. I want you to know, that I forgive you." (Then, maybe, . . . you don't even mail, that letter.)

Some people, you do need to go, . . . directly to. But, sometimes, it's not, the best thing. You might get, a good mature Christian, to advise you, whether you ought to go directly to them, or write a letter, that you never send.

That certainly, isn't easy. Genuine forgiveness, is never easy. Some of us, here today, are carrying, some deep wounds. You're carrying some pain, . . . that, you've carried, for years and years. Yet, when you think about, that person, who hurt you, through betrayal, or rejection, or something else, . . . it’s still as fresh, as if it happened, this morning. The pain, is still there. You still, hurt. And, you're still filled, with resentment.

\* What do you do? How are you going to get on, with your life? You say, "Why? Why in the world, should I forgive that person, who hurt me, so much? You have no idea, how much, they hurt me." I don't. You're right. I don't. "Why in the world, should I offer grace, . . . to that person?" You ought to do it, . . . for three reasons:

**1.** I need to be gracious, to others, to forgive others, who've hurt me, because, **God has been gracious, to me.** He is gracious, on a moment by moment, basis. If you can't forgive, . . . you need to pause a minute, and realize, how much God, has forgiven you. You will never, have to forgive anyone else, . . . more, than Jesus Christ, . . . has already, forgiven you.

Maybe, what you need to do, is stop for a minute, and consider, . . . that, you haven't always, gotten what you deserved, either. God has been gracious, with you. And, the Bible says, because we've been forgiven, by Christ, . . . we're compelled, . . . to forgive those, . . . who hurt us.

**2. Because, the alternative, . . . is bitterness.** We know, that one, . . . doesn't work. Scientists tell us, that the most unhealthy emotion, there is, . . . is the emotion, . . . of resentment. It always hurts you, more than, . . . anybody else. It's like, a cancer, . . . or fire, in your heart. It's going to, . . . eat you up.

You always hurt yourself, more with bitterness, . . . more than you do, the other person. While you're stewing, while you're fretting, while you're resenting, while you're thinking of retaliation, . . . revenge, . . . while you are rehearsing the pain, over and over in your mind, . . . they go on, their merry way, . . . totally oblivious. They've, dropped it. You're not hurting anybody, . . . but, yourself, . . . with your resentment.

Resentment, . . . doesn't work. Bitterness, . . . doesn't work. Hebrews 12:15 – *"Be careful, that none of you, fails to respond, to the grace, which God gives, . . . for if he does, there can very easily, spring up in him, a bitter spirit, which is not only bad, in itself, but can also, poison the lives, of many others."*

**3. God expects you, to do it**. Matt. 6:15 – *"For if you forgive men, when they sin against you, your heavenly Father, will also, forgive you. But, if you do not forgive men, their sins, your Father will not, forgive your sins."*

You can’t make it any clearer, than the way Jesus said it, right there. Forgiveness, is a two way street. Do not burn the bridge, that you've got to walk across, to get into heaven. Jesus says, we cannot receive, what we're unwilling, to give. You say, "I could never, forgive that person", . . . then, I hope, . . . you never sin. Because, you're going to need forgiveness, . . . to get into heaven.

The fact is, you're going, . . . to be hurt, in life. That's an, established fact. The only question is, What are you going to do, with those hurts? If you hold on to that hurt, and let it build in your life, you will end up being a gnarled, shriveled up, bitter, hateful person. Your heart, is going to grow hard, and you're going to die, bitter and lonely. Cause nobody, wants to be around, . . . a bitter person.

You say, "But, you don't understand. I could never, . . . forgive that person. I could never, do that. You don't know, how much, they've hurt me." I don't, know that. But, God does. Still, . . . you say, . . . "I could never, . . . forgive that person."

That's why, you need Jesus. You can't manufacture, enough love in your life, to handle all the ways, . . . you're going to be hurt. You are going, to be hurt in life, . . . and, you don't have enough love, to overpower that, on your own. You need, Jesus Christ. And, you need His love, in your life, or you're going to die, a bitter person. You need Him, to fill you with love, . . . every moment, of the day.

“Offering Grace”, Good News About Grace - Part 6 of 7

Matthew 10:8 – *"Give as freely as you have received!"*

**FORGIVENESS QUIZ** (Circle True or False):

A person should not be forgiven until he asks for it. T F

Forgiving includes minimizing the offense and the pain caused. T F

Forgiveness includes restoring trust and reuniting a relationship. T F

You haven't really forgiven until you've forgotten the offense. T F

When I see someone hurt, it is my duty to forgive the offender. T F

**I. WHAT FORGIVENESS IS *NOT***

1. It is not \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

2. It isn't \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the seriousness of the offense.

3. It isn't \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ a relationship without changes.

4. It isn't \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ what happened.

**II. WHAT IS GENUINE FORGIVENESS?**

**1. REMEMBERING \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Ephesians 4:32 – *"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you."*

**2. RELINQUISHING \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Romans 12:19 – *". . . Never avenge yourselves. Leave that to God, for He has said that He will repay those who deserve it."*

**3. RESPONDING \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Luke 6:27-28 – *". . . do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you."*

1 Corinthians 13:5 – *"Love keeps no record of wrongs."*

**4. REPEATING \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Matthew 18:21-22 – *"Peter asked, `Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?' `No.' Jesus replied, `seventy times seven!'"*

**WHY OFFER GRACE TO OTHERS?**

**1. GOD IS GRACIOUS TO ME.**

Ephesians 4:32 – *"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you."*

**2. THE ALTERNATIVE IS BITTERNESS.**

Hebrews 12:15 – *"Be careful that none of you fails to respond to the grace which God gives, for if he does there can very easily spring up in him a bitter spirit which is not only bad in itself but can also poison the lives of many others."*

**3. GOD EXPECTS ME TO DO IT.**

Matthew 6:15 – *"For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."*