

In **2 Timothy 3**, the apostle Paul warns young Timothy that the end times will be especially dangerous because of the moral degeneration of mankind

“For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,”

(2 Timothy 3:2–3, NKJV)

- And of course, this is the world in which we are now living

In the world, we now live it can be easy to feel defeated and overwhelmed yet the Bible shows us that through Jesus we are More than Conquerors

“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”

Romans 8:37 NKJV

In this series, we will see how we can be over-comers and live in victory in every area of life!

The Apostle John says we have the capacity to overcome the world and everything that is the enemy of Christ

“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” **(1 John 5:4–5, NKJV)**

We have looked at overcoming Rejection, Fear, Comparison, and Shame

Now let's look at Unforgiveness

We all experience offenses, hurts, unkind words, rejection, and betrayal at some point in our lives

- These painful interactions often involve close friends or family members but can also come from strangers
- Regardless of the source, we must forgive

“Then Peter came to Him and said, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. ‘But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’”

So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses." (Matthew 18:21–35, NKJV)

- This is a shocking story, but Jesus has a specific purpose for telling it
- He illustrates three shocking truths about how God sees the issue of unforgiveness

In the story, the forgiven man refuses to extend forgiveness to his fellow servant

Because of his hard heart, the forgiveness of his debt is revoked, and he is turned over to the torturers

- Jesus says this is what will be done to those who don't forgive others
- Torture is a pretty strong word
- The truth is, unforgiveness is torture
- A torturous lifestyle in every way

Many physical problems can be traced back to unforgiveness

- Ulcers, nerve issues, heart issues, headaches, skin irritants, and high blood pressure

Unforgiveness is also emotional torture

- It wreaks havoc on our bodies and minds

Outbursts of anger, mood swings, increased stress personality changes, depression, anxiety, and cynicism can all be linked to unforgiveness

Depression is an epidemic in America

- The number one clinical definition of depression is *anger turned inward*
- Internal anger is the highest consumer of our emotional energy
- Even after positive or exciting events in our lives many of us feel depression

Many pastors say that their worst day is Monday

- Many preachers feel down or flat, even after having exciting services the weekend before
- Even when something good is happening it can take about 24 hours for your emotions to catch up
- After a great weekend of services!

We are not designed to be repositories for anger!

Unforgiveness is also spiritual torture

- Not only does it separate us from God's love and peace, but exposes us to demonic torment

“Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.” (Ephesians 4:26–27, NKJV)

- The word devil here is *diabolos*
- Which means slander

There is nothing wrong with anger; we all get angry at times in life

- The problem comes when we don't deal with our anger

The devil actively looks for ways to come into our lives to cause division

- He will slander our spouse, friends, coworkers, and everyone else in your life
- His goal is to divide all our relationships
- He also causes social divisions such as racism, violence, lawsuits, and even wars

This is the demonic torment we open ourselves up to when we don't deal with our anger

- When we are walking in forgiveness, we are walking under God's covering and protection
- Hate, on the other hand, is the devil's territory
- If you refuse to forgive, you walk out from under God's protection
- You expose yourself to torment

Three Key Points Concerning Forgiveness

Unforgiveness harms you much more than the people with whom you are angry

Forgiveness does not make others right; it just makes us free

- I am not saying that what someone else did is alright
- I am not saying that it can be excused
- I am just saying that I want to be free, and I do not want to walk with this in my heart

Forgiveness is one of the most self-loving things you will ever do

- The issue of forgiveness is more about you than anyone else
- If you love yourself, forgive

“But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (Matthew 6:15, NKJV)

God will not forgive our sins if we do not forgive others

- It doesn't matter if you have confessed them or not
- That is the shocking truth of this story
- God will only give us as much grace as we are willing to give away
- If we do not forgive others, He will not forgive us!

It's Shocking How Petty Unforgiveness Seems From God's Perspective

In our story in **Matthew 28**

- The first servant owed his master “*ten thousand talents*”
- A talent was approximately 60-70 lbs. of Gold
- A value as high as \$300,000
- That would equal *Three Billion Dollars*
- He would have had to work 200,000 years to pay off his debt
- No one could ever pay this back
- The servant's only option was to beg for mercy
- Incredibly, the master forgives his debt

This debt-free man finds one of his servants who owed him 100 denari

- About three month's wages for a soldier or laborer at that time
- Worth about \$10,000

Pretty surprising that he would demand this debt to be paid considering how much he has been forgiven

- He doesn't show his servant mercy or patience when he begs
- He has him thrown into prison until the debt is paid in full

We live in a world full of hurting people, problems, and wars

- We see racism, bigotry, sexism, and all forms of hatred
- The Kingdom of God is nothing like that!
- We have a very forgiving King, and He is willing to forgive us all of our sins – more than we could ever repay!
- We just have to be willing to forgive other people
- In a comparison of what we have done to Jesus, others have done very little to us

It is ridiculous for us to withhold forgiveness in light of God's incredible grace toward us

“Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”

(Matthew 18:21, NKJV)

- Jesus didn't say, 8 times, 12 times, or 40
 - Those are more biblical numbers
- He said up to seventy times seven – 490
- The point is that you always forgive

“The LORD is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever. He does not punish us for all our sins; he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve. For his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west.

The LORD is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him. For he knows how weak we are; he remembers we are only dust.”

(Psalm 103:8–14, NLT)

- Jesus is the nicest, most gracious, and most merciful person we could ever meet
- He has countless reasons to ditch any one of us

He is so much different in the area of forgiveness than we are

A recent poll says that 94% of Americans believe it is important to forgive

- Only half of Americans put it into practice
- Many believers walk in unforgiveness and feel completely justified
- But they are not!
- We must learn to forgive people!

In our text, **Matthew 28**

- The master forgives his servant's enormous debt
- He doesn't make him pay back most of it, some of it, or even a little bit of it
- He forgives the entire debt
- When he is unwilling to forgive his servant, the master called him “*wicked*”

“Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.’” (Matthew 18:32, NKJV)

- Forgive – “to leave” or “to send away”
 - “I permanently release the offense I have against you”

It doesn't matter if I have been hurt, damaged, offended, or embarrassed

- I do not require an apology or explanation
- You do not have to pay me back
- I will absorb the cost
- The balance between us is ZERO!

There is no such thing as conditional forgiveness

- “I forgive you, but if you do that again...”
- If it has conditions attached, it is not forgiveness

When we release someone, we are releasing all judgment to God

- We will not talk about them, hurt them, or pay them back
- We must trust God to be a fair judge
- As far as we are concerned the debt is paid in full

“Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.” (Romans 12:17–19, NKJV)

What Forgiveness Doesn't Mean

Forgiveness doesn't mean you lose the right to self-protection

“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.”

(Matthew 10:16, NKJV)

- Forgiving someone doesn't mean you have to be best friends with them or return to an abusive situation
- You do not have to let yourself be a target for further abuse
- Sometimes people are not safe or compatible with us

Forgiveness does not mean that I cannot seek legal or police protection

- Forgiveness doesn't mean we have to put ourselves in harm's way

Forgiveness doesn't mean we have no basis for confrontation

“but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—” **(Ephesians 4:15, NKJV)**

When done correctly in humility, confrontation is an important step to rebuilding relationships and gaining an understanding

- Confrontation is part of developing healthy long-lasting relationships
- Remember that forgiveness is not based on the outcome of the confrontation
- Forgiveness is not a conditional agreement

Our Sins Cost Jesus His life and He loves our Offenders as Much as He loves us

- Someone may owe us the emotional equivalent of 100 denari
- But we owe Jesus billions or trillions of dollars for what we've done for Him
- Our sins nailed Jesus to the cross not the Roman soldiers

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16, NKJV)

- It doesn't say only a select few

We cannot forgive from our hearts if we let pride in and consider ourselves better than our offender

Some people are easier to forgive than others

- Some people are just frustrating and easy to forgive
- Others are more difficult or hurtful and a bit harder to forgive

But then there are the devastators in life

- Those who have done something devastating to us or our families
- A terrorist, murderer, rapist, thief, evil dictator...
- God doesn't overlook or excuse their behavior, but He simply doesn't hate them the way we do
- We must forgive and leave the rest up to God

Most of the New Testament was written by a man who once killed Christians for a living

- He was present when Stephen was martyred yet chose to forgive his persecutors – **Acts 7:58**

The early church feared and hated Paul, but God loved him enough to appear to him in person and change the entire trajectory of his life

- Regardless of what people have done, they are still human beings and precious in His sight

We must Forgive from our Hearts

“bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.” **(Luke 6:28, NKJV)**

We all have had reason to hate someone

- But true healing comes when we forgive and pray for that person
- If we can't pray for someone then we haven't forgiven them
- Blessings force forgiveness from our heads to our hearts
- Whether the person who devastated you is alive or dead you must forgive them
- Keep blessing them until you get your healing

Keep giving grace away and watch God fill your heart with his grace

Resist Satan – The Accuser of the Brethren

“Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.”

(Revelation 12:10, NKJV)

- Satan will always try to come around and stir up old issues and re-offend you
- He also tries to get us to pick up everybody else’s offenses
- We must learn to recognize his accusations against our spouses, friends, coworkers, authority figures, etc.
- Remember forgiveness is spiritual warfare

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.”

(1 Peter 5:8–9, NKJV)

- Don’t go to bed angry
- Deal with offenses and hurts every day
- Don’t take up other people’s offenses
- Don’t rehearse and nurse hurts
- Reverse hurts by forgiving, blessing, and loving your enemies
- Don’t justify unforgiveness, self-pity, or bitterness
- Satan wants to keep us separated from God and each other
- Decide right now that you are going to overcome unforgiveness