

## SERMON TRANSCRIPT

**SERMON TITLE:** The Freedom of Forgiveness

**SERMON REFERENCE:** Ephesians 4:31-32

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Find in your Bibles Ephesians chapter 4 if you will, and in just a moment we're going to look at verses 31 and 32.

There are two problems that do great psychological, emotional, and spiritual damage to anyone, and perhaps to you. One is guilt and the other is bitterness. Guilt imprisons us; bitterness poisons us. Forgiveness is the answer both to bitterness and to guilt. Guilt is the result of something we have done wrong; bitterness is our reaction to someone else's wrong, or our perception that someone else has wronged us. They both have us in a prison, and it is forgiveness, hallelujah, that sets the prisoner free from guilt or from bitterness. God's forgiveness of us sets us free from the prison of guilt, and our forgiveness of others sets us free from the prison of bitterness. Look at it here in Ephesians chapter 4 verse 31. Do you have it? Okay, *"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."*

Now look up here and let me tell you something. When you forgive another, truly forgive from your heart, you set two prisoners free; one of them is you. When you forgive another, truly forgive from your heart, you set two people free. One, the person that you have forgiven; the other is yourself.

Now, to forgive actually means to pay a debt. There are no bargain pardons. That's the reason our Lord taught us to pray there in the model prayer, *"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."* Sin is a debt that we owe. We have sinned against Heaven, against the kingdom. We have been sued for damages. And it's a debt we cannot pay. But God in mercy and in love has forgiven us and paid that debt. You see, there are no free pardons. When somebody is forgiven, somebody else has paid.

For example, if a man owes me a thousand dollars, and he says, "Pastor, I can't pay," and I say, "All right, I forgive you," the moment I say that it cost me what? A thousand dollars. You see, to forgive is to actually pay the debt. The word forgive literally comes from a word that means to bear the burden. When our Lord forgives us, does He pay a price? Put in your margin Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 7. The Bible says, *"In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sin, according to the riches of His grace."* Out of the riches of His grace, He paid the debt Himself and therefore cancelled that debt. That's the reason we call salvation grace, G-R-A-C-E, God's riches at Christ's expense.

Now, when you came to our Lord and you said, "Lord, I'm a sinner. I need to be saved. Jesus died to save me. He paid for my sin with His blood on the cross. Forgive me. Save me," God does, and you're forgiven of your sin. You're placed into the family of God. But you're not done with forgiveness then. From there on, you have to begin to forgive others. You receive mercy; you show mercy. And Jesus taught us to pray, *"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive those who are our debtors."* *"Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us."*

Now, once you're in the family, once you're saved, once you're born again, you must learn to practice forgiveness to all others, because if you don't, you're going to dam up the stream of God's mercy. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of forgiveness. First, forgiveness when you get saved puts you in the family of God. But then if you fail to forgive others over some matter, then that, dear friend, destroys family fellowship. So three things I want us to notice today. I pray God will write them upon your heart. Get out a piece of paper and a pen, and I want you to write down, first of all, what I'm going to call **the compelling reasons for forgiveness**. Why should you forgive? Let me give you some factors.

The very first factor I want to give is what I'm going to call **the grace factor**. Now look at the Scripture again. Ephesians 4 verse 32, "*And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*" Now, why should I forgive you if you sin against me? Because God has forgiven me when I sinned against Him, "*Even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*" God has willingly, lovingly, freely forgiven us. We call that grace.

I read about a young employee in a business. That man in a growing business, under temptation, misappropriated several hundred dollars. It was found out. He was summoned to the manager's office. He knew this was most likely the end of his job. As he went up the stairs he had a very heart. He walked in to that executive's office. The man looked at him face to face and said, "Is it true that you have done thus and such?" The man bowed his head and said, "Yes, it is true. I am guilty." The man behind the desk said, "Let me ask you a question. If I were to forgive you and keep you in the position that you're in, could I trust you in the future to be absolutely honest?" The man said, "Sir, if you would forgive me and give me another chance, I'll be the best employee you ever had." The man behind the desk said, "Sir, you're forgiven. But before you go, I want you to know you're not the first man in this company that made such a mistake. Years ago, as a young employee, I did almost exactly the same thing that you did. And I was forgiven. And the mercy that was shown to me, I'm showing to you, and may God have mercy upon us both." That's the spirit of this verse of Scripture, "*Be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*"

Sam Jones, a great evangelist of yesteryear. He said something I like. He said, "I made up my mind I'm never going to fall out with anybody until they treat me worse than I treated Jesus Christ." Amen? "*Be ye kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us.*" You see, we forgive because we've been forgiven.

I got a letter once; I saved it because it's a treasure letter. It was written from a woman in a hospital. She said, "Pastor Rogers, I'm writing you because I don't know who to write. I'm from Georgia. I'm over here by myself. I needed surgery. I needed some extra blood." She said, "Two young men from your church came over here and donated blood for me. They didn't know me and I don't know them. I don't

even know their names,” but said, “I want to tell you the note they left to me.” And here’s what the note was. “We gave our blood for you because Jesus gave His blood for us.” Isn’t that beautiful? She said, “I don’t even know who to thank. I don’t know who these young men are because they did not leave their name.” “We gave our blood for you because Jesus gave His blood for us.” Friend, we forgive others because He has first forgiven us. One of the reasons that you and I need to forgive is the grace factor.

Second reason, not only the grace factor, but **the guilt factor**. Now, notice what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 6 verses 14 and 15, “*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you; But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*” Now, you think about that. The person who refuses to forgive destroys the bridge over it, over which he must travel. An unforgiving spirit is unforgivable. Forgiving and being forgiven go together. The only person who can afford not to forgive is the person who will never need forgiveness. Notice the prayer, “*Father, forgive us, as we forgive those.*” Now, friend, if you don’t intend to forgive that person who’s wronged you, that’s a very foolish and even a stupid prayer for you to pray. “Father, You treat me like I’m treating them. Father, forgive me in the same manner, I forgive others.” Now you think about what you’re praying.

You say, “Well, I’m not going to forgive the other person.” Then, “Father, don’t forgive me.” “Well, I’ll forgive her, but I’ll never have any more to do with her.” God says, “Okay. I’ll forgive you and never have any more to do with you.” You see what you, what you’re asking? “Father, forgive us as, in the same manner, that we forgive those who sin against us.” May I tell you, friend, listen carefully, an unforgiving spirit is not merely your missing a blessing; it is a wicked, vile, gross sin, in the same category as stealing or blasphemy. Why? Because what is God? God’s nature is a nature to forgive. That is the nature of God. And aren’t we glad that He is a forgiving God? We’re so glad of that. Well, then, if you don’t forgive, you’re not like God. And if you’re not like God, what is that? Ungodliness. An unforgiving spirit is ungodly. It is ungodly. It is a terrible thing. Jesus illustrated this with a story.

Take your Bibles and turn to Matthew chapter 18 here for just a moment because we’re going to be there for a second. Matthew chapter 18. Jesus, speaking about forgiveness, illustrates it this way. He gave a parable. Matthew 18 beginning in verse 23, “*Therefore is the kingdom of Heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.*” Now just underscore that: ten thousand talents. Here’s a man taking inventory. Here is a man who’s having an audit done. And he finds out that a man owes the king ten thousand talents. “*But for as much as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment be made.*” That is, he’s to be put in debtor’s prison. “*The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, ‘Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.’*” But we’re going to see that was a vain

boast because there was no way he could have done it. *“Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.”* “Loosed him” means that he set him free.

Now, don’t miss what Jesus is saying in this parable. If you’re not careful, you’re going to miss it. When He said “ten thousands talents,” He is talking about an enormous debt. A talent was the largest measure of money known in the Roman world. The research that I did said that it would be equal to the wages for 10,000 men for 17 years. In today’s dollars, it would be billions of dollars, billions of dollars. When Solomon built the temple, the wonderful temple that he built there and overlaid it with gold, the Bible says there were 8,000 talents of gold on that magnificent temple. This man owes ten thousand talents. As a matter of fact, the word talent here literally means without number. It was used without number. Sometimes the Bible translates it myriads, just myriads. It’s the Greek word we get our word myriad from. It means, it’s just some astronomical amount of money. This man is in debt. There is no way possible that he can pay. And the king forgives him. At that moment, it cost the king ten thousand talents.

Now what happened, according to this story? Well, if you find out that that man who had been forgiven goes out and finds someone that owes him money. Look if you will in verse 28, *“But that same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him a hundred pence.”* Now, a pence is a day’s labor, *“and he laid his hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, ‘Pay what you owe. Pay me that that thou owest.’”* Now, here’s a man who’d been forgiven myriads. Here’s a man been forgiven billions, and he has somebody that owes him a hundred day’s wages, takes him by the throat, and says, “Pay me.” And the man says, “I can’t pay you right now. Have mercy.” But Matthew 18 verse 30, *“But he would not: and went and cast him into prison, until he should pay the debt.”* Do you see it? Do you see the analogy that Jesus is making? And Jesus speaks of the wickedness of that man, who had been forgiven and would not be forgiving. And so here’s what Jesus said in verse 35. He talks about then the king who is very wroth and has that man who had been forgiven taken and put in prison himself, and He says in Matthew 18 verse 35, *“So likewise shall My Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.”* Now, what is our Lord saying? Our Lord is saying it is absolutely wicked for those of us who have been forgiven so much to refuse to forgive somebody else.

Is there somebody who’s wronged you? And you’re not forgiving, you’re holding back forgiveness? And you have had our Lord with His precious, the gold of His blood and the silver of His tears to pay your sin debt? Do you know what James says in James 2 verse 13? *“For he shall have judgment without mercy, that shewed no mercy; he shall have judgment without mercy, that shewed no mercy.”* Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount; Matthew 5:7, *“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”*

Why should I forgive? Listen, friend, I need to forgive because of the grace factor. I have been forgiven. I need to forgive because of the guilt factor. I will still need to be forgiven day by day. And only a person who never sins can afford not to forgive, which is no one.

Third reason, we talk about the grace factor, the guilt factor. **The grief factor** is a reason we ought to forgive. Because you see, this man who failed to forgive endured the severest discipline. The Bible teaches here in Hebrews, chapter 12 verse 15 that we're to be, "*Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God.*" That is, you fail to receive and give grace, "*lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and many thereby be defiled.*" If you don't forgive, friend, you're going to know unusual grief, you're going to be troubled, and others around you are going to be troubled. An unforgiving spirit does you personal harm. It's not just simply what your unforgiveness does to someone else; it's what it does to you.

Now, sometimes somebody says, "He did me thus and such harm. I'm going to get even." Have you ever thought about what that means, you're going to get even? You're up here. Here's some miscreant who does something bad to you and he harms you, and you say, "Look what he did to me. I'm going to get even." That's what you do. You come down to his level.

Well, you say, "Then I won't get even. I'll just continue to hate." Well, if you continue to hate, what you're doing is committing emotional suicide. What you're doing is filling yourself with bitterness, which is an acid which will destroy you and hurt you as much or more than it does the person on whom it is poured. You say, "But, but now, wait a minute, Pastor. If you knew what they did to me, you wouldn't let them off the hook." What I'm trying to tell you is you're on the hook with them. You are on the hook with them.

You need to forgive because of the grief factor, the grief that the bitterness, the unforgiving spirit will do to you. You forgive them for their sake. You forgive them for Jesus' sake. Forgive them for your sake. Remember, when you forgive you set two people free, and one of them is yourself.

Fourth reason you need to forgive. Not only the grief factor, but **the gain factor**. Now listen to Matthew chapter 5 verse 24. Our Lord talks about somebody coming to the temple to worship, and they're bringing a gift to the temple. And they remember that there's a problem between them and someone else. Here's what our Lord says you're to do. "*Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, then come and offer thy gift.*"

If you're here this morning when the offering is given and you have bitterness in your heart, keep the offering. Don't spend it, because it's tainted money; taint yours. Don't spend it. Before you make your offering and there's somebody that you need to go make things right with, and you know it, you go be reconciled to your brother. Then come and bring your offering. Listen again to

Matthew 18 and verse 15, “*Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.*” In both of these Scriptures, one says, “*be reconciled to your brother,*” the other says, “*thou hast gained thy brother.*” A brother is a precious thing, a terrible thing to waste. When you forgive, you heal a broken relationship and you gain back a brother. Think about it. Think about when people come to church with broken relationships. Think about when people who name the name of Jesus live with broken relationships, do you know what that does? Listen to me. If there is in your heart today bitterness and grudge and unforgiveness, first of all, you **disgrace Almighty God**. When your children fuss and fight, it disgraces the parents, does it not? It disgraces the Father.

I’ll tell you what else it does. **It discourages the saints**. Have you ever been in a church where there is a church fuss or fight? The devil had rather start a church fuss than sell a barrel of whiskey any day, did you know that? It discourages the saints.

I’ll tell you what else it does; **it drives away the lost**. Do you know what the greatest evangelistic outreach Bellevue Baptist Church has? Is the love that we have one for another. People come and say, “Behold, how they love one another. I sense the fellowship, the love of God in that church.” But an unforgiving spirit and rancor and division and hostility drives away the lost.

I’ll tell you what else it does; **it delights the devil**. It delights the devil when you fail to forgive.

There is the gain factor. Think what we gain when we gain a brother, when we gain a sister. I had a brother who did me wrong, not a brother in the flesh, but a brother in the Lord, a man that I dearly loved. He did wrong. Something rose up in me, said, “Well, that’s it. Cut him off.” The Lord said, “Don’t do that. Forgive. Restore.” And I did, and I don’t have a better friend on earth than that person. That is the gain factor. Friend, there is somebody that you need to be reconciled with and you bring them back into the fellowship and into the fold.

Now, those are compelling reasons for forgiveness. Now, let me talk to you about the **costly requirements for forgiveness**, because, see, there’re no bargain forgivenesses. There are no bargain pardons. What does our Scripture say? Look in Ephesians 4 verse 32, “*Be ye kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.*” Now Jesus is the model of our forgiveness, and you’re going to see that Jesus paid the price. We talked about redemption through His blood. And, friend, you’re going to have to know a little personal Gethsemane and Calvary if you truly forgive somebody who has deeply hurt you. Now how, therefore, if we’re to forgive as Jesus forgave, how did Jesus forgive? May I list some ways?

First of all, we are to **forgive freely**, freely. His forgiveness is free, spontaneous, and quick. Don't forgive after you have collected your revenge. You know, sometimes people hurt us and we say, "They don't know how much they hurt us, and I'm going to teach them how much I've been hurt, and I'm going to excoriate them, I'm going to blame them, I'm going to castigate them, I'm going to make them suffer. And after they've suffered, after they've wept, after they've pled, after they've bled, after I've gotten my pound of flesh, then perhaps I'll forgive." Has anybody ever treated you that way and then finally said, "Well, I'll forgive you?" What do you feel like saying? "Hey, I don't need to be forgiven. I've already paid." You forgive freely. You should be so anxious to forgive a person that you chase them and catch them in order to forgive them.

Isn't that what God has done for us? We love Him why? Because He first loved us. When Adam and Eve sinned against God in the Garden of Eden, God did not sit up there in Heaven and say, "Well, I'm going to wait, and if, perhaps, they come to me, I might be persuaded to forgive them." God came to the garden and God said, "Adam, Adam, where are you?" That wasn't the voice of a detective. That was the voice of a brokenhearted God who was seeking someone who had sinned against Him, freely seeking to forgive. Matthew 18 verse 15, listen to it again, "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." It doesn't say to go and tell him off. "Go tell him secretly, privately, lovingly, and if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." Freely.

Peter asked the Lord, in Matthew chapter 18 verses 21 and 22, "Lord, how many times if a person sins against me, shall I forgive him? Seven times?" That's a perfect number. Jesus said, "No, seventy times seven." Four hundred and ninety. And by inference, He didn't mean you stop at four hundred and ninety-one. What our Lord says is, "Get the mathematics out of it. Don't keep score. Forgiveness has no limit. Forget the math. Forgive freely, even if you have to chase somebody in order to forgive them."

Number two, listen, not only should you forgive freely, but you **forgive fully**, totally. Make sure that you forgive. Now, if somebody comes to you, and by the way, I had somebody come to me and say, "I want you to forgive me," my first inclination was to say, "Don't worry about it. That's okay. Don't worry about it." But I realized that would have been wrong for me to do that, because that was not forgiveness. And what that individual needed and what that individual deserved was forgiveness. So I didn't just say, "Don't worry about it. Forget it." I said, "I forgive you. I forgive you." That's very important. You see, sometimes when we do wrong, we don't go to another individual and say, "Forgive me." We say, "If I have hurt your feelings, I'm sorry. I want to apologize." Very tricky. "I want to apologize. Let me tell you, let me explain it to you why I did what I did."

The word apologize comes from a Greek word *apologia*, which means to make a defense. In apologetics we're defending the faith. So many of us want to apologize. What we're doing is really defending ourselves. If you've wronged

somebody, don't apologize, say, "Would you forgive me? I was wrong. I was wrong." It's not an apology that I want, I want forgiveness. And if somebody's wronged you, don't just say, "Oh, forget it. Never mind." Say, "I forgive you." Do it fully. Then it's buried in the grave of God's forgetfulness. Forgive fully.

Now, next, **forgive finally**. That is, don't bring it up again. Isaiah 43 verse 25, "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and I will not remember thy sins," sins that are buried in the grave of God's forgetfulness. If you forgive, do it finally, once for all. You say, "Well, now, pastor, that's bring up a problem to me. God doesn't remember our sins anymore? I thought God was omniscient. How can God ever truly forget anything?" Well, intellectually, God cannot forget. God doesn't lose His memory. When God says, "I will remember them no more," that means, "I will not bring them up. I will not use them against you. If I remember them, I remember them as forgiven sins. I don't continue to have that spirit of resentment that human beings tend to have. The sin is buried." Now, many times we say we have forgiven, but we've not forgiven finally.

I read about a man whose office files were getting so full of extraneous papers. He was a man who couldn't bear to throw anything away, and the files got fuller and fuller and fuller. One day he said to the secretary, she said, "Sir, can I clean out the files?" He said, "Well, okay, clean them out. But before you throw anything away, make a copy of it." Is that the way we forgive? "You know, I'm going to get rid of it, but I'm going to remember it." No, you forget it, forgive finally.

Now, last of all, you **forgive forcefully**. What do I mean forcefully? I'm telling you, folks, it is not natural to forgive. Our spirits demand justice. "They need to pay. They hurt us and they need to understand just how badly they hurt us." It has well been said, "To err is human; to forgive is divine." You need Jesus to be forgiven, and, friend, you need Jesus in order to forgive. "Be ye kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another." Where do we get that kindness? Where do we get that tenderheartedness? It comes from Jesus. The same one who has forgiven us is the one who puts His spirit in us and enables us to have the force and the power to forgive.

Many of you have heard of or read of Corrie Ten Boom, a precious Dutch girl back in World War II. Was taken by the Nazis and put in a Nazi concentration camp, along with her sister. And the reason that Corrie Ten Boom was incarcerated and put in that prison camp at Ravensbrook was because she'd been hiding the Jews as a Gentile to keep the Nazis from their holocaust and atrocities. Her hiding place was found out. Corrie Ten Boom, with her sister, were put in the concentration camp. Corrie's sister died in the concentration camp. When she was there in that concentration camp, she was treated with unimaginable brutality: almost starved, hard work. But one of the things that happened to her, she was forced by a prison guard to strip naked and to take a shower while he watched her with his leering eyes and almost raped her with his eyes. Humiliated this righteous and godly girl. Later, Corrie Ten Boom got out of prison, and she was serving God and bringing a

message on forgiveness. And after the message, up walked a man and put out his hand and said, “Corrie, isn’t the grace of God something wonderful? Isn’t forgiveness wonderful?” And when she looked into that man’s face, she froze! Because it was that prison guard, the one who had humiliated her, the one who had abused her, the one who had misused her. And now he saunters up to her, puts out his hand, and says, “Isn’t the grace of God wonderful? Isn’t forgiveness wonderful?” She said, “Again, I froze. I wanted to put out my hand because I had spoken on forgiveness, but,” she said, “I couldn’t. And I prayed, ‘O, Jesus, help me to forgive.’” And she said, “I put out my hand and put my hand in his hand,” and she said, “The grace of God and the love of God began to flow through my body.”

Now friend, I want you to think about how Jesus Christ has forgiven us. And it is the power of Jesus Christ, who forgave us, that enables us to forgive somebody else. And don’t you insult the grace of God by saying, “I can’t forgive.” You forgive freely. You forgive finally. You forgive fully. And you forgive forcefully.

Now, I want to talk about **the results of forgiveness**. And I want you to think about the three-fold results of forgiveness. What will be the certain results of forgiveness? Number one, friend, when there is forgiveness, there is **personal emancipation**. You’re set free. Personal emancipation. Secondly, there is going to be **reconciliation**. There’s going to be a reconciliation between you and somebody else. You’re going to gain your brother. You’re going to be set free. You’re going to gain your brother. And, last of all, friend, there’s going to be **spiritual jubilation**. There’s going to be revival. Do you know what real revival is? Real revival is not just getting the roof off and getting right with God. Real revival is getting the walls down and getting right with one another.

Is there somebody who has wronged you? Is there somebody, you say, “They owe me, they’re going to pay?” Friend, forget it. Bury it in the grave of God’s forgetfulness and forgive. “Pastor, can I forgive somebody who continues to do the same thing? Can I forgive somebody who hasn’t repented, somebody who continues to hurt me, to withhold what they owe me, somebody who continues to abuse or to lie or to slander? Can I forgive them?” It’s a hard question because even God doesn’t forgive without repentance, does He? What if that person hasn’t repented? Then is it up to you to “get ‘em?” No, God says, “‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay,’ saith the Lord.” Romans 12:19. And if you cannot forgive them because of their continuing practice, you can have the spirit of forgiveness. What did Jesus do on the cross? In Luke chapter 23 and verse 34, He prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” While they’re nailing Him up, He’s praying for forgiveness.

I had somebody who sinned against me and those that I love horribly. I made up my mind I was not going to carry a load of resentment. The individual was still in an attitude and action of sin. But one morning, about 2 in the morning, I wrote out a full, complete forgiveness, not only forgiving, but receiving back that individual. And before God, I signed my name to it and I uploaded that forgiveness and put it in

the drawer. Anytime that individual wants to download it, it's there. It's already on file. It's already given! It's done so far as I'm concerned! I don't bear that burden! Whether it's ever received or not, it's offered. Isn't that what Jesus did on the cross? Not everybody is saved, but He bought salvation for us all, and all we have to do is receive it.

Friend, don't carry around that load, even if you have to put forgiveness in escrow, waiting for that individual to come along and write the check of repentance and faith. You have uploaded it and they can download it. But don't you go around in the prison house of guilt, swallowing the poison of bitterness. How foolish. How foolish.

Let's bow our heads. Now, friend, all true forgiveness begins with receiving forgiveness. And if you've never really received forgiveness, this is the time for you to do it. God longs to forgive you. Jesus Christ died to forgive you. He wants to cleanse you and He will cleanse you. If you'd like to be saved, would you pray a prayer like this, "Dear God," oh, pray it, friend, "Dear God, thank You for loving me. Thank You that You're a forgiving God. Thank You that You've said, "If we confess our sin, You're faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Lord Jesus, I need You. I want You. I open my heart right now and I receive You as my Lord and Savior. Come into my life. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus." Pray it. Mean it. Ask Him. Believe Him. "Save me, Jesus." Did you ask Him? By faith, thank Him. Pray, "Thank You for doing it. I stand on Your Word. I give myself to You. I receive You. You're now my Lord and Savior. Now give me the courage to make it public, and help me never to be ashamed of You. Amen and Amen."