

Scars of the New Jesus People - Forgiveness & Offense

Delivered: January 21, 2024

Scriptures: [Col 2:13-14](#), [Luke 17:1-5](#), [Mt 24:10-13](#), [6:14-15](#), [18:32-35](#); [Mk 11:23-26](#)

Colossians 2:13-14

Intro

One of the great promises of this gospel we have received is this;

"if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" ([2 Corinthians 5.17](#)).

Our old nature, and our union with the world, is dead.

"Our old self was crucified with Him" ([Romans 6.6](#)).

And the new person, who is joined in union to Christ, is alive!

"If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is alive because of righteousness" ([Romans 8.10](#)).

The very nature and Spirit of Jesus now lives inside anyone who believes that Jesus is who He says He is. [1 John 4.17](#) says,

"...just as He is, so are we in this world."

So whatever we see of Jesus in the Scriptures, and revealed by the Holy Spirit, is what He intends us to become and demonstrate to the world.

That's the bedrock truth of our new identity.

But the reality of walking this out in real time,

in a fallen world where the kingdom has come but it still yet to come,

where our lives intersect with others,

where our flesh still has a voice,

where we are still in the process of maturing and being conformed to the

image of Jesus...the reality of actually being who Jesus says WE are is a bit more complex.

Recap from last week

We talked last week about the scars of the New Jesus People. Resisting what our flesh wants to do is going to leave a mark. Pushing against the gravitational pull of this world, and becoming conformed to the image of Jesus is going to leave scars...because the cross that we are called to bear in order to take on the character of Jesus, always leaves a mark. And those scars are actually glorious. They confirm that we're alive, that we are not slaves to sin or the flesh any longer. Every time we choose the way of the Spirit, our flesh receives another death blow. The scars of the New Jesus People show that we had the choice of operating in the flesh or the Spirit and we chose the Spirit...and the scar is the proof.

So the encouragement of the new covenant is that because we have the Spirit of Jesus living inside of us, we now have the ability to grow in His character. He is meek, He is humble, He is full of wisdom, He is always at rest, He is led by the Spirit...and He is always forgiving.

If the nature and character of Jesus is now our nature and character, then that means His forgiving nature is now our forgiving nature. We can't just receive His forgiveness without extending His forgiveness. We can't be like the Dead Sea, only receiving and never releasing. It's dead because it has no outlet. So too is the fate of anyone who holds on to offense and bitterness.

Forgiveness is now a necessity for God's people.

The Necessity of Forgiveness

We've talked about this before, but what is God's favorite tool to form His character in us? Other people. God uses other people's faults and weaknesses to be the chisel that forms the character of Christ in. He intentionally crosses our paths with other wounded and broken people, who, like us, are in their own process of learning how to bear the cross themselves. And it's the intersection of my story with yours that gives both of us the opportunity to become more like Jesus.

We simply cannot go through life without relating to others. We cannot be the Bride of Christ without intentionally being in relationship...and that means we cannot escape injury. But, because the Spirit of God lives in us, we can now chose to not focus on the pain someone else has caused us. The world doesn't have that choice. Rather than focusing on the wound, we focus on Jesus...who became sin (2 Cor 5:21) so that those who injured Him could be forgiven and live with Him forever.

Consider this: what did Jesus experience that glorified Him and seated Him on the throne forever? The cross; His response of forgiveness to *our* sin resulted in eternal glory...and He has the scars to prove it. God takes what the enemy intended for harm and uses it for His glory...and He does the same for us. Our response to other people's sin determines the measure of glory we inherit. That's the promise of Romans 8.28, He causes all things to work together for good for those who love Him...and that includes every difficult relational wound inflicted by someone else. God intends to turn that wound into something glorious...a scar that proves you chose to bear the cross of forgiveness instead of justice or revenge or offense.

God Forgives

In Colossians 2.13-14 (NKJV) Paul writes this,

"And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you ALL of your trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of the certificate of debt that was against us... And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

The debt we were forgiven was impossible to pay. Romans 5.10, says that we were "enemies of God." But God, in His grace, He took ALL of that debt onto Himself, nailed it to the cross, and FORGAVE us completely. And paying the price for our forgiveness left scars on His body that tell the story of His love.

And that forgiveness is not solely for the purpose of going to heaven. Forgiveness now becomes our calling to be forgivers of those who sin against us. Everything that we receive in the kingdom is for someone else (See 2 Corinthians 1.6 - "if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort").

Offense

When someone hurts us, we have the choice of 2 responses; offense or forgiveness.

Jesus said something very revealing about this life in [Luke 17.1](#),

"It is impossible that no offenses should come."

In this age, offenses will come. It is not a question of having opportunity to be offended; the question is what will your response to that offense be? Will you hold on to it? Will you let take root? Or will you release it with forgiveness?

Jesus could've said that as the kingdom continues to come on earth as it is in heaven that offenses and betrayals will decrease. But Jesus actually says that at the end of the age offenses will increase.

Listen to what He says in [Matthew 24:10-13](#) when His disciples come and ask what are the signs of His coming and the end of the age (v3),

"...many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved."

Many will be offended, and their offense will cause them to betray one another and even hate one another (that's murder).

Jesus says here that the "love of many" will grow cold. This tells me that He is not talking about the world carrying more offense at the end of the age, He's talking about believers.

The Greek word used here for "the love of many" is *agape*...that's the love of God...God-like love. *Agape* is selfless, expecting nothing in return. The world doesn't have access to *agape* love. Jesus is saying that believers will be offended, *believers* will betray one another, *believers* will move from loving one another to hatred. And the consequence of believers carrying offense toward one another is it's going give rise to false prophets. Where? in the church. This will happen because unforgiveness and offense has blinded believers to the truth...so now they are susceptible to what is a lie.

John Bevere writes in *The Bait of Satan*,

"Offended people will be able to find Scripture passages to back their position, but it is not the correct division of God's Word. The knowledge of God's Word without love is a destructive force because it puffs us up with pride and legalism (1 Corinthians 8.1-3). This causes us to justify our offense rather than repent of the unforgiveness that Jesus extends *to that person*."

And because often it is a fellow believer who has hurt us, the offense feels like a betrayal.

In Psalm 55.12-14 David says,

"For it is not an enemy who reproaches me; then I could bear it. Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me; then I could hide from him. But it was you...my companion and my confidant. We took sweet fellowship together, and we walked to the house of God together."

You find the greatest betrayal among those who are closest to you.

Anger and Betrayal

You may be wondering the same thing I am..."but what do I do with these feelings of anger and betrayal that this other person has caused me? They hurt me for no reason...I know in my heart that I'm innocent...and as far as I'm concerned, my anger is justified."

Thankfully, Scripture answers that question for us,

"Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger"
(Ephesians 4.26, ESV).

Bob Gladstone points out in *Marks of the Cross*,

"the natural, initial response to unjust treatment may be anger. The Bible acknowledges that and does not call the anger sin at this point. But neither does the Bible give us license to let that anger shift into angry attitudes, words, or actions. Scripture accepts that anger may be our natural, first response, but then it instructs us to deal with it before it becomes sin. In fact, it tells us to deal with anger before the end of the day."

The anger Paul says we can have without sinning in v26 is the same anger he says to put away five verses later; v31,

"Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor (shouting), and evil speaking be put away from you."

We simply don't have the right to do anything with our initial anger except put it away and replace it with love.

We Forgive

Paul writes in **Ephesians 4.32**,

"Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving each other, just as (*in the same way that*) God in Christ also has forgiven you."

And **Colossians 3.13**,

"bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as (*in the same way*) the Lord forgave you, so must you do also."

Because we are born again in the image of the One who forgave us ALL of our trespasses, His nature in us now compels us to forgive those around us ALL of their trespasses. And His nature not only compels us, He commands us to forgive.

Jesus says in **Matthew 6.14-15**,

"If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

"But I thought you said He forgave us all of our trespasses?"

He has, and your act of forgiving others confirms that you have received His forgiveness. But according to Jesus' words in **Matthew 6.14-15**, choosing to hold on to offense and unforgiveness confirms the opposite...you're claiming the saving grace of His blood without demonstrating the love that nailed Him to the cross in the first place. If we don't forgive, we don't embrace His cross. And if we don't embrace His cross, we don't walk in His power. This is why scars are beautiful on God's people...they are evidence of resurrection power working in our lives.

The Unforgiving Servant

In **Matthew 18**, Jesus illustrates the necessity of forgiveness in the parable of the Unforgiving Servant. The servant owed the master the modern equivalent of \$14 billion...an extreme amount to show the insurmountable debt that we owed God. The master forgave the servant. But then the debt-free servant goes to one of his fellow servants, who owed him the equivalent of \$4,000, and demanded that he pay him what was owed. When the second servant couldn't pay it, the debt-free servant threw him in prison. Jesus then says this;

"Then his master called the first servant and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all the 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 18.32-35**).

The forgiveness that we have received from God demands that we extend the same forgiveness to our "fellow servants"...who legitimately owe us. They took something from us...they may have taken our trust, our joy, our hope, our plan for the future...they legitimately owe a debt. But the gospel is unbending on this issue. We have to release them from what they owe just as we have been released from the debt that we owed.

The Consequences of Unforgiveness

Prayer

Unforgiveness hinders our prayers. The two key teachings of Jesus on prayer found in **Matthew 6** and **Mark 11**...and both are immediately followed by a teaching on forgiveness.

In **Matthew 6** Jesus is where Jesus says don't pray like the hypocrites and the Pharisees who pray in such a way that others will see them. Pray in this manner,

9 ...Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
10 Your kingdom come.
Your will be done
On earth as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts,

As we forgive our debtors.

13 And do not lead us into temptation,

But deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

14 “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Jesus speak about forgiveness and prayer in the same breath. In the economy of heaven, prayers either soar on the wings of forgiveness or they are weighed down by the chains of offense.

And then in **Mark 11** beginning in **v23** Jesus says,

23 Whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.

24 Therefore, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

25 “And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

26 But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”

Read those passages carefully...don't cherry pick the first part because it says we can move mountains in prayer and receive anything from God. These passages **ALSO** clearly imply that if we don't forgive others, then our prayers will not be effective and we will not be forgiven by our Heavenly Father.

Are you not seeing breakthrough in things you are praying for? It could be that unforgiveness is jamming the lines of communication with God. Ask the Holy Spirit to

reveal areas of unforgiveness that you may have, and allow forgiveness to cause your prayers to ascend like incense.

Health and Well Being

For the sake of time I won't go in depth here, but unforgiveness will have an effect on your physical body. This is from the Johns Hopkins Medical website, a *secular* journal:

"Chronic anger puts you into a fight-or-flight mode, which results in numerous changes in heart rate, blood pressure and immune response. Those changes, then, increase the risk of depression, heart disease and diabetes, among other conditions. Forgiveness, however, calms stress levels, leading to improved health."

Do you have chronic illness of some kind? Ask the Holy Spirit if there is unforgiveness that you are holding on to. *Perhaps* forgiveness is the key to your healing.

Now we must be mature saints; we can't see someone contending for healing and just assume they are operating in unforgiveness. That's not love. Healing is often a mystery. I just want to submit to us that there are instances where choosing to forgive can impact our lives physically.

Conclusion

I mentioned what Jesus said in [Luke 17.1](#) earlier...that offenses will come in this life. Let's look at what happens next in that passage. Beginning in [v3](#),

"Be on guard! If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him."

So this tells me that we aren't to just let people run over us...we confront sin and bad behavior, in love, with the truth of the gospel. And when there is repentance, we forgive. Then Jesus says in [v4-5](#),

"And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him. And the apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith.'"

Two things to point out here; first, you may be asking,

"Well, what if the person who sinned against me *doesn't* repent?"

There is no teaching in the new covenant that says we have permission to withhold forgiveness because of the absence of repentance. Jesus died for me before I had a chance to repent...God demonstrates His love for us in that while we were *still* sinners Christ died for us ([Romans 5.8](#)). Jesus didn't wait for us to repent before He took on the scars of forgiveness. So we don't have the luxury of waiting on our neighbor's repentance before we bear the cross of forgiving them.

Sowing and Reaping

In fact, there is a great Spiritual principle that we tap into every time we forgive...and I believe that understanding this principle will help us in our weakness. It's the principle of sowing and reaping.

When we sow the seeds of forgiveness we are sowing to the Spirit, and the promise is we will reap from the Spirit. It's an act of violence against the flesh that always wants to hold out for justice. And the promise of [Galatians 6.8](#) is that,

"the one who sows to his flesh will reap destruction from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit."

[John Bevere](#) says this when he realized this kingdom truth,

"I realized that the love I was giving (through forgiveness) was being sown to the Spirit, and eventually I would reap those seeds of love. I didn't know from where, but I knew the harvest would come. No longer did I see it as a failure when love wasn't returned from the person I was giving it to. It freed me to love that person even more! If more Christians recognized this, they wouldn't give up and become offended."

So, the first thing to point out about [Luke 17](#); we don't have permission to wait for the person to repent before we extend forgiveness.

The second thing to point out about this passage in [Luke 17](#); the disciples response to Jesus saying we are to forgive extravagantly was,

"Lord, increase our *faith*" ([Luke 17.5](#)).

What Jesus had said caused them to experience doubt that it was possible to forgive like that.

It wasn't Jesus telling them to heal the sick that caused them to see their need for more faith...it wasn't the task of raising the dead...it wasn't taking the gospel to the ends of the earth...it was the impossibility of being able to forgive extravagantly. The disciples realized they couldn't do what Jesus was asking them to do without an increased measure of faith.

We can't do anything without God...and forgiving others is no exception. Forgiving extravagantly is hard, He knows that, He has the scars to prove it. So don't do it alone, ask Him to help you, to increase your faith, to give you the grace to do what is impossible with man.

Just watch; forgiveness will become an increasingly easier habit when we realize it is part of our identity in Christ. The day we were born again we became forgiven forgivers. As much as our old nature may get angry and want to hold on to resentment when someone wrongs us, we have to remember that we are no longer by nature unforgiving, offended people. Our initial emotions may say that we are, but our Christ-like response to injury declares that we are not who we used to be. By the Spirit, we are now loving, forgiving people like Jesus. We are alive with the Spirit of God living inside of us. The New Jesus People will bear the beautiful scars of overflowing relentless forgiveness.