



WEEKLY SERMON

Volume No. 2022 Issue No. 27
July 24, 2022

Sunday July 24, 2022

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Message The Mountain Peaks of Forgiveness – Part I

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Text: Ephesians 4:31-32

“How Great Thou Art”

In Colossians 3:16 we read, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

In Psalm 145:2-3 we read, **“Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever. (3) Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.”** I can say without fear of argument that this song has captured the hearts of Christians more than any other song in our generation.

“How Great Thou Art,” in its original form came from Sweden in 1885, over 139 years ago. It was a poem written by Carl Boberg, a 26-year-old preacher in the summer of 1885 under the title **“O Store Gud”** which is translated **“O Great God.”**

It was a warm summer day. Carl and some of his friends had gone to a meeting some two miles from home. On the way back they were caught in a thunder storm. As the storm broke, the lightning flashed, the thunder rolled, and the winds swept across the fields; and then, as quickly as it came, it was all over.

The sun again came out and with it appeared a rainbow. Then, as the rainbow disappeared and the sun began to sink in the west in the thrill of the evening, from a distance could be heard the song of the thrush and the church tower sounding the tolling of the bell memorializing a funeral that had been held that afternoon.

The very atmosphere, the beauty of the surroundings, and the sound of the bell - all combined to draw from the heart and mind of the young preacher a poem, the subject of which after many translations in many lands and after many years would become known as **“How Great Thou Art”**.

We are indebted to Mr. Stewart K. Hine, who was used of God to literally give this song to the world, and for the thrilling story leading to its writing and development. Each translation helped enrich the poem as each country added its own particular "flavor," but it was this English missionary by the name of Stewart K. Hine who worked in the Western Ukraine and later in Sub Carpathian Russia, who gave us the inspiring original English words as we know them today.

As one looks back, one can't help but see the hand of God sending Hine to the particular area in which he worked, for he later said, **“God put me amid unforgettable experiences in the Carpathian Mountains.”** These experiences, plus the grandeur and beauty of his surroundings, did much to flood Hine with the feeling of awe and wonder at so great a God. It was not until 1948 that Hine added the fourth and final stanza to this hymn

O Lord my God! When I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works Thy hand hath made.
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed.

When through the woods and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze:

And when I think that God, His Son not sparing,
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in;
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin:

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!
Then I shall bow in humble adoration,
And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art!

Refrain:

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee:
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee:
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

In *HIS* Amazing Grace,
Pastor David Miklas

"What is Forgiveness?" - Part I

Have you ever said, "I don't get mad, I just get even!"? Or perhaps you said these words, "Yes, I will forgive you, but don't expect me to forget what you have done to me." If you have said those words, or something similar, you need to listen to this message. My friends,

The most thrilling realization in life is knowing that all your sins have been forgiven at Calvary. You've not fully experienced life until you have realized that Jesus Christ has cleansed you of your past and present and future sins by the Blood of the Lamb of God.

Nothing in life will compare to that experience.

It's more blessed to experience the forgiveness of your sins than to experience the greatest of HEALTH.

It's more blessed to experience the forgiveness of your sins than to experience the greatest of ATHLETIC ABILITY.

It's more blessed to experience the forgiveness of your sins than to experience the greatest of ADVENTURES.

I believe the most thrilling realization in life is the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ. The second greatest aspect of forgiveness comes when someone forgives you for a wrong you have committed against them.

Please turn to Ephesians 4:31-32 and follow me as I read these two breathtaking and arresting words.

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: (32) And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Would you notice again verse 32, **"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, FORGIVING one another, even as God for Christ sake, hath FORGIVEN you."**

In your lifetime, I don't believe you will have the ability to forgive another until you have understood and experienced the forgiveness of God. What a phrase, **"even as God has forgiven you, so we forgive one another."** If we don't know how God has forgiven us, and what he has forgiven us of, we are going to have a difficult time forgiving one another.

My Friends, it is characteristic of saints to forgive. We who have been forgiven by God should we not also forgive others? Paul warns us about bitterness and anger; both are deadly sins of an unforgiving spirit. Someone said, **"An unforgiving spirit is the Devil's playground, and before long it becomes the Christian's battleground."**

Pastor, I have a RIGHT to be bitter, look at what I have endured.

Pastor, I have a RIGHT to be angry, look what he did to me.

Pastor, I have a RIGHT to give that person a piece of my mind.

No, you don't have that RIGHT. Notice again verse 32a. **"And be ye KIND..., TENDERHEARTED, FORGIVING..."**

Notice at the end of verse 32, we are told why it is characteristic for the saints to forgive, **"even as God for Christ sake hath forgiven you."** Even though neither you nor I deserve it, God's character is revealed when He says, **"I don't care what you've done to Me; I'll love you, be kind to you and tender to you, and forgive you, regardless!"**

Forgiveness follows the example of Christ. The abuses which come against us are

TRIFLING compared to the mountain of sins Jesus washed away at Calvary on our behalf. There on the cross, in the tense of the language of the first words of the cross, Jesus repeatedly said, "Father forgive them, Father forgive them, Father forgive them, for they know not what they are doing."

None of us have endured what Christ endured, yet He forgave us all our sins, totally and completely.

**He who cannot forgive others burns the bridges over which he himself must pass.
An unforgiving Christian is a CONTRADICTION TO THE GRACE OF GOD.**

**"Since the Lord our debt did pay, saved our soul in grace one day;
we like Him should try to live, always ready to forgive."**

This Sunday morning and for the next four Sunday mornings I am going to speak on "**The Mountain Peaks of Forgiveness.**" Today, we are just going to answer one question, "**What is Forgiveness?**"

As we begin, let me start by defining for you what the word "**Forgiveness**" is **NOT**. There are three actions "**Forgiveness**" is **NOT**. Upon hearing these "**Not's**" of forgiveness, I trust you will firmly and finally put them out of your mind.

FIRST: Forgiveness is NOT tolerating Sin. Forgiveness is not accepting, or overlooking, or tolerating someone's sin. Upon hearing this fact some people will say,

"You are not very forgiving, if you cannot accept the way I live." My friends, if you need forgiveness, then the way you are living is sinful.

"You Christians say you are loving and forgiving, but since you won't tolerate my sin, isn't that a contradiction?"

My friends, when you understand what forgiveness is and

**if you accept their sin,
if you overlook their sin,
if you tolerate their sin,**

then you are making a **MOCKERY** of sin. The best the world can do is to tolerate sin, by accepting the sin of other people. But those who are Christians go much further than that,

**We don't accept the sins of the sinners.
We don't overlook the sins of the sinner.
We don't close our eyes to the sins of the sinner.**

WE FORGIVE the sinner of his sins! That's what God has done for us. God does not show love to the sinner by accepting their sin. That wouldn't change the person. God doesn't tolerate sin. Rather, God's justice must punish sin. Romans 6:23 tells us, "**The wages of sin is death...**" But beyond that, because of the blood of Christ at Calvary, God forgives sins.

Remember this, "**Forgiveness of sin is light years beyond toleration of sin.**"

If a person's lifestyle is sinful, don't tolerate that sin, but show them they can have forgiveness in Jesus Christ. **NEVER** equate forgiveness with toleration of sin, because the two are not the same. Even the Bible says, "**Love rejoices NOT in iniquity.**" Love and forgiveness will never join in the toleration of sin.

SECOND: Forgiveness is NOT immediately forgetting. Let me repeat that statement again as it has probably caught some of you by surprise. "**Forgiving is not immediately forgetting.**" We have got to get this settled in our minds once and for all that "**forgiving is**

not immediately forgetting." We have the idea that if we forgive someone, we will have **AMNESIA** of the facts of what they did. That is not what forgiveness is.

Now the goal of forgiving is forgetting, but it's not immediate. We should immediately forgive, but we will not immediately forget.

You see "**forgiving is the promise not to raise the issue again.**" Let me also repeat that statement, "**forgiving is the promise not to raise the issue again.**" You are not going to forget right away. Rather what you need to do is mark that file in your mind as permanently closed. Remember, "**love thinketh no evil.**" A genuine, forgiving Christian doesn't **KEEP SCORE!**

Now when it comes to God, thankfully we find he does have **AMNESIA** to our sins. God's Word tells us in:

Hebrews 10:17, "**And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.**"

Isaiah 43:25, "**I, even I am He Who blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.**"

, "**As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.**"

In these verses, what God is saying is He will never again bring up our sins in a court of law, nor at any judgment seat! Those sins will never be used against us again. Thank God, we are never going to see those sins again. Now

FIRST: Forgiveness is NOT tolerating Sin.

SECOND: Forgiveness is NOT immediately forgetting Sin.

THIRD: Forgiveness is NOT the absence of consequences. Please underscore that in your mind and listen to this carefully, "**Forgiveness is NOT the absence of consequences.**"

Just because you have been forgiven for a wrong done in some area of your life, it doesn't mean that there will not possibly be some consequences. Even if you carry an emotional remorse in your soul, the consequences may remain.

The consequences may involve your HEALTH, if you have not been living right.

The consequences may involve your FINANCES, if you have misused funds.

The consequences may involve JAIL, if you have committed a crime.

In the sight of God, the consequences are there, however they are not there for the sake of **PENALTY**, but for **PURIFICATION**, so that we don't repeat the sin ever again.

As Pastor, over the years I have heard this phrase repeatedly,

"The consequences to my sin should never affect me again, since I have been saved. I did things before I became a Christian. God has forgiven me, so now I should be free from any consequences."

Wait, my friends. As I understand forgiveness, I understand that your relationship with God is now forgiven. But for you to claim that everything you did before you were saved should have no consequences now is simply not true. Praise God you have been forgiven, but there are still consequences to your sinful actions. All of us in some way are a living testimony of this point.

So...what then is a Biblical definition of **FORGIVENESS**? How about this?

"Forgiveness is a CHOICE, to reconcile with an offender by erasing their debt, and agreeing to live with the consequences of their sin." Let me repeat that, "**Forgiveness is a CHOICE, to reconcile with an offender by erasing their debt, and agreeing to live with the consequences of their sin.**"

Forgiveness is a CHOICE. It doesn't matter who is offering forgiveness – you, God or somebody else. In order to forgive, it has to be a choice of the **FREEWILL** of that individual. Forgiveness occurs in the will. The individual has to choose to forgive.

God made that choice, according to Ephesians 1:7, to forgive us before the foundation of the world, "In whom (in Christ) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." Long before Eve ever reached up and took a bite of that fruit from the garden and handed it to Adam to eat; in the heart of God His Son had already died on the cross to forgive you and me of our sins. Do you realize that before any of us ever existed:

**God knew the awful sinful things we would commit.
God knew the terrible sinful things we would say.
God knew the sinful thoughts we would think.**

Regardless, He still created us and chose to forgive us in His heart, even before we did those terrible, awful things in life. Forgiveness is a **CHOICE** God made.

My friends, you and I will never forgive anyone until it is an act of our will to choose to forgive that person.

**If you feel it is your OBLIGATION to forgive, or
If you feel it is your DUTY to forgive, or
If you feel it is your RESPONSIBILITY to forgive,**

Then there cannot be true forgiveness. **OBLIGATION** and **FORGIVENESS** can **NOT** be seen together. That is why one of the most divine things we will ever do in life for our fellow man is to forgive them.

Do you remember the incident in John 8 with Jesus and the woman taken in the act of adultery? Jesus said to those standing around "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." Hearing that, all those standing around left until finally it was only Jesus and the woman. At this point Jesus had the right to pick up that stone and kill the woman. However in John 8: 10-11 we have recorded this dialog.

"When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? (11) She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."

My friends, Jesus made a deliberate **CHOICE** to forgive that individual.

Forgiveness is a CONCERN. According to our definition we have a concern "to reconcile with our offender." The point here is to be RIGHT with the one who has offended or sinned against us.

**It ought to be a concern that our RELATIONSHIP with that person is not right.
It ought to be a concern that our FELLOWSHIP with that person is not right.**

We must forgive that person,

**so that we can be reconciled again.
so that we can be friends again.
so that we can have a relationship again.**

My friends, God did that for us in Romans 5:8-11 where we read,

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. (10) For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. (11) And not only so, but

we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.”

God reconciled with us so that He could have a relationship with us. As Jesus was being nailed to the cross you recall he kept on repeating, "Father forgive them, Father forgive them, for they know not what they are doing." Why was He saying that? Because Jesus wanted to provide the means for God to again be reconciled with us.

Forgiveness has a COST. It cost the forgiver to forgive the forgiven. If you owe me a debt of \$1,000.00 and I forgive you of that debt, that means it will cost me a \$1,000.00. Here is where we struggle with forgiveness in the human flesh.

We say, "they did me wrong, they owe me."

We say, "they hurt me badly, I forgive them, but they will pay."

We say, "they said some mean things about me, so vengeance is mine."

My friends, forgiveness comes with a price tag. You will pay a price to forgive. Let me pause for a few minutes and let the Word of God remind you what it cost the Lord Jesus Christ in **Isaiah 53:4-11**,

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. (4) Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. (5) But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. (6) All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. (7) He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. (8) He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. (9) And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. (10) Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. (11) He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.”

Do you realize the enormous cost God had to pay for your sins?

It cost Jesus heaven's Glory and fellowship with the Father during that trip to the cross.
It cost Jesus His blood to cover your sins and mine.

You may be thinking, "Pastor, I accepted Christ as my Saviour. I know that one day I'll go to heaven because of my faith in Jesus." My friends, if you can say that, that's nice, and I am glad for you. But again I ask you: **Do you realize the cost paid by Jesus to forgive your sins?**

If we each fully realized the cost Jesus paid to forgive our sins, neither you nor I would ever want to sin again after salvation.

Forgiveness carries a CONSEQUENCE. Listen again to the definition of forgiveness, especially the last statement, "Forgiveness is a **CHOICE**, to reconcile with an offender by erasing their debt, and agreeing to live with the consequences of their sin." Here is a point at which many of us stop short when offering forgiveness to one another. We refuse to live with the consequences of what that person has done to us. However, **true forgiveness occurs when we agree to live with the consequences of what that person has done to us.**

You see, by forgiving me, God has to live with the consequences of my sin. I messed things up with my sin, and now God has to live with the hurt of my foul-ups. When you sin:

**you are messing things up in your HOME,
you are messing things up in your LIFE, and
you are messing things up in your RELATIONSHIPS.**

Whenever you sin, there are always consequences, and the person who forgives you agrees to live with those consequences. That means, please listen, if I am the forgiver:

**That means I never ever bring up that sin again.
That means I never ever will open the file of the hurt again.
That means I never ever will bring up that offense again.
That means I no longer hold that sin over your head.**

2000 years ago, Jesus went to the cross willing to pay the debt of the consequences of our sins. There at Calvary was the mountain of all our sins. What a mountain that was! On top of that mountain stood an old rugged cross, the emblem of shame and suffering. That was where **"In Christ we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."**

That's why I say the most thrilling realization a person will EVER experience will be the forgiveness of their sin. Remember there are several types of forgiveness:

There is the God given JUDICIAL forgiveness of our sins that we experience by faith in the finished work of Christ at Calvary.

There is the God given FELLOWSHIP of forgiveness we can enjoy daily as found in I John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Finally, there is the FORGIVENESS we either receive or give to one another as found in Ephesians 4:32 "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, FORGIVING one another, even as God for Christ sake, hath FORGIVEN you."

Have you used the statements I mentioned at the beginning of this message - **"I don't get mad, I just get even."** or **"Yes, I will forgive you, but don't expect me to forget what you have done to me."**?

Maybe your words have caused a wall of division between brothers in Christ or several family members. Why not agree to **"forgive one another just as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you!"**

Maybe there's someone against whom you have a grudge, or perhaps a grudge is brewing against you. You'll do yourself a tremendous favor if you go to him or her and get it off your chest by either forgiving them or asking them for forgiveness of you. Forgiveness is the promise **NOT TO RAISE THE ISSUE AGAIN**. Forgiveness is marked on the permanent file: **CASE CLOSED**.

Maybe this morning you need to experience the forgiveness of the Lord Jesus Christ. He died on the cross of Calvary to save your soul, to forgive your sins, to provide for you eternal life with Him in heaven. If that is so, right now in your heart, look up to heaven and say, **"Lord Jesus right now I accept you as my Savior. Save me in Jesus' name."**

Praise the Lord! Because of the cross of Christ, we can sing:

**Calvary covers it all, My past with its sin and strain,
My guilt and despair, Jesus took on Him there,
And Calvary covers it all.**

If God has spoken to your heart after reading the sermon "**What is Forgiveness?**" - **Part I** then right now talk to God about what He has spoken to you.

Do you have the assurance that one day you will go to heaven? If you have no assurance that you know Jesus Christ, then I trust you will decide to accept Him as your personal Savior. The Bible tells us in

Acts 16:31, **"...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved..."**

Romans 10:13, **"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."**

This prayer is here for those who need to ask Jesus to be their personal Savior: **"I do want to go to Heaven. I know I am a sinner, and I do believe Jesus Christ died for me. I realize I cannot buy this great salvation, nor can I earn it. Knowing Jesus died on the cross and arose from the grave to pay my sin debt and to purchase my salvation, I do now trust Him as my Savior, and from this moment on I am completely depending on Him for my salvation."**

If you made the decision to accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, please let me know. Please send an e-mail to pastormiklas@aol.com and I will send you some literature that will help you in your Christian life.

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