

As We Also Have Forgiven

A debt you could never pay, and the one you are still holding

SPEAKER	Mark Proeger
DATE	Sunday, September 20, 2026
PASSAGES	Matthew 6:12-15; Matthew 18:21-35; Genesis 50:19-21; Genesis 39:20-21; Colossians 2:14; Romans 12:19; 1 Corinthians 13:5; Matthew 5:44; Matthew 11:28-30; John 14:15
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:07:24 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

The line sits right in the middle of the prayer Jesus taught us: forgive us our debts, *as we also have forgiven*. Mark Proeger's case is that this is not advanced Christianity but the doorway every believer already walked through — and that once you have felt the true size of the debt God cancelled for you, holding someone else's becomes not merely wrong but impossible.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Jesus does not command forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer so much as *assume* it. The request for mercy and the granting of it are welded together in one sentence.
- ◆ Envy is wanting what is not yours; jealousy is wanting what is. God is jealous for you because you belong to him, and he wants the whole heart — including the part that unforgiveness has clouded.
- ◆ Ten thousand talents is roughly 164,000 years of labor, around nine billion dollars. A hundred denarii is real money — a couple of months' wages — and it is not close.
- ◆ One reading of the parable is that the servant never received his own pardon. If you cannot forgive yourself, you will go out and collect from people who owe you far less.
- ◆ Forgiveness is not pretending nothing happened, forgetting, or excusing. It is releasing the offense and giving up your right to revenge. You may still call evil evil.

- ◆ The biblical test is a list. Love keeps no record of wrongs — so ask whether you keep one, even if it has only one item on it.
- ◆ Unforgiveness is a prison you build around yourself. The other person keeps living their life; you stay frozen at the event.
- ◆ Forgiveness is as supernatural as anything God does. Every time you cannot manage it, that is an invitation to go back to the source.

► 1:07:24

Mark opened by admitting that a friend whose name “rhymes with Liker” had gone through his sermon notes and retitled the message *Hooie Gooby* — a prank they had been running on each other since junior high English class. The actual title was the one he wanted the room holding all morning: “As We Also Have Forgiven.”

A jealous God wants the whole heart

► 1:09:12

He picked up a thread from Glen's testimony earlier in the service — that God is jealous for us — and cleared away the objection people raise about it. “Envy is wanting something that is not yours. Jealousy is wanting something that is yours.” Wanting another man's wife is envy. Wanting your own wife back from someone pursuing her is jealousy, and it is the right response to a wrong pursuit. God is jealous for you because you belong to him.

Which is where forgiveness comes in. He wants all of the heart, and some hearts are clouded by something dark. Mark was careful not to indict the room — some people are carrying this, some are not, and some do not yet know that they are.

Five men, ten warriors, and three years

► 1:10:33

In January 1956, Roger Youderian, Pete Fleming, Nate Saint, Ed McCully and Jim Elliot flew into the jungles of Ecuador to reach the Waorani, a people no one had made contact with and who were known to kill outsiders. They had been dropping gifts from the plane for months so the sound of the engine would mean something good. They camped by a river and traded for three days. Then ten warriors came out of the jungle and ran all five through with spears.

They had guns. They had committed in advance that the guns were for hunting and would never be turned on a person, and they kept that. Mark let the room sit with what that must have cost: “What if you're watching your friend die and you've got a gun?”

► 1:12:22

Within three years the wives went back — with a small child, and with the sister of the one man who had not married — lived among the Waorani, and led them to Christ. Nate Saint's son was eventually adopted by the tribe and baptized by the very men who had speared his father. “They become brothers in Christ and now they'll be together in eternity.”

The clause Jesus will not let us skip

► 1:13:22

“...and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil... For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

MATTHEW 6:12–15 ↗

Notice, Mark said, that Jesus finishes the prayer and then keeps going — and that our request for pardon is inseparable from the assumption that we have already granted it. “This isn't advanced Christianity. This is basic Christianity.” A great deal of ink has been spilled over whether verse 15 is about salvation. He declined the argument: he was standing in front of people who want to obey Jesus, and nobody in the room was trying to get into heaven on a technicality.

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

Nine billion dollars and ten thousand

► 1:15:04

“Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.”

MATTHEW 18:21–22 ↗

Translations split over seventy-seven and seventy times seven, and Mark waved the debate off. The point is that you do not stop. “If you're keeping track of how many times you've forgiven, I'm worried about you. You missed the message” — little hash marks on the bathroom mirror, *I forgave Matt again*.

► 1:16:49

Then the numbers, which the parable depends on and which most of us skate past. Ten thousand talents is a weight of silver equal to something like sixty million days of labor — 164,000 years of continuous work. At \$150 a day that is nine billion dollars. It is a debt no one in the room could ever retire. The hundred denarii is not the five dollars people sometimes make it: it is a couple of months' wages, five or ten thousand dollars. Real money. Not close.

“You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?” And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.

MATTHEW 18:32–35 ↗

► 1:18:15

Mark floated a reading he offered as speculation and clearly found persuasive: that the servant never actually received his pardon. Unable to forgive himself the nine billion, he went out and started collecting. “Sometimes if you don't forgive yourself, you're going to turn and you're going to be upset at the very people who owe you something much, much less.” He put himself in it — in twenty-four years of marriage he is the one who plays the blame game, annoyed about a misplaced thing, while Ceci extends grace he has not earned.

Just, and the justifier

► 1:20:54

To get at why the debt had to be paid at all, Mark played a short video of the Dallas pastor Josh Howerton answering the question of why Jesus had to die — a parable about a king renowned for justice and love, a thief in the treasury, escalating sentences, and a final decree of forty lashes, which is a death sentence. The thief turns out to be the king's own daughter. The kingdom gathers; the executioner raises the whip; the king shouts stop, takes off his own shirt, wraps his body around hers and says, “Now hit her.”

► 1:23:25

The sentence stood and the king died in her place. Payment for sin has to be made or God is not just — no one would call a judge just who simply waved away a rape because the man was sorry. But God is love, so he made the payment himself. “We are that little girl who was stealing and deserved death, and the Lord came down in Christ and saved us and set us free.”

That is the lever. “Sometimes our unforgiveness is most easily dismantled by understanding the gospel at a deeper level.” Go back to the person you cannot release, and if you still cannot, go back again and remember how much you needed forgiving. Mark has a situation in his own life going back decades; every time it surfaces he says, “Lord, I release that person to you. I love them and I want you to bless them.” Some people get complete freedom in an afternoon. Others take years, and God is working something in them the whole time.

What forgiveness is not

► 1:26:49

His grandfather once told him and his brother Damon that the two hardest words in English are *I'm sorry*, and the next three hardest are *I forgive you*. He was about eleven when he heard it and knew immediately it was true.

So the working definition: “Forgiveness isn't pretending nothing happened. It's not forgetting or excusing the pain. Biblically, forgiveness means releasing the offense and giving up your right to revenge.” You are permitted to call evil evil — he actively encouraged it. What you release is the pain and the verdict, both to God. “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” Nor does forgiving mean the person escapes the consequences of what they did.

Joseph, dragged through it

► 1:28:26

Mark read the whole of Joseph in Potiphar's house — the prospering, the refusal, the cloak, the false report — and pointed at the line tucked into the middle of the disaster:

“But while Joseph was there in the prison, the Lord was with him.” Seventeen years old, sold by his own brothers, and still he tells Potiphar's wife, *how then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?* He skipped straight past his master to the one actually offended.

► 1:32:21

From Jacob's house to Potiphar's house to a dungeon, where he stayed at minimum two years and possibly eleven or twelve — he was thirty when he came out, thirteen years after the pit. Mark put the

honest question to the room: imagine receiving promises from God as a young man and then walking that road. “That might be a good time to have a crisis of faith.”

► 1:33:43

Years later, with Jacob dead, the brothers send Joseph a message claiming their father left instructions to forgive them. They are probably lying, Mark noted — Jacob could simply have told Joseph himself — and Joseph, who is not stupid, probably knows it. He cuts through all of it and makes none of it matter.

“Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.”

GENESIS 50:19–21 ↗

► 1:37:52

The victim comforted his attackers and spoke kindly to them. And the men who sold him were the men his wisdom went on to keep alive — eleven patriarchs, which is to say Israel itself, which is to say the line that runs to Jesus. Had Joseph had them beheaded once the grave was covered, he would have cut that story short. Mark's summary was blunt about the cost: God knew the end for Joseph and it was great, and he dragged him through hell to get him there.

Then Howerton again: “If heaven is the place where everyone is forgiven and hell is the place where no one is forgiven, every time we learn to forgive, we pull heaven down into our lives. Every time we choose not to, we pull hell up.”

Gwyneth, and a face she could not recognize

► 1:39:26

Looking for radical stories, Mark found Gwyneth Pugh-Jones, an eighteen-year-old trainee nurse in England. A man she had been seeing, and who knew she would not sleep with him, raped her violently for six hours and burned her with cigarettes. Years of pain followed. Through a strange chain of events she met his sister, told her what he had done, and watched her leave in anger. Six months later the sister came back and asked her to visit him in prison, where he was despondent and suicidal over his guilt.

► 1:40:49

Mark was honest about what he might have thought in her place — that the man's despair sounded like a fair outcome. What she did instead:

“I did have some things I wanted to tell him and I rehearsed what I was going to say, but as I sat in the chair across from him, all of that disappeared. As I looked at this almost unrecognizable man in front of me, just absolutely broken, God showed me how he saw him, and it was a true moment of godly compassion. He showed me this man restored. He showed me him as a prince, as a brother, someone with absolute true value.”

She visited five times over eighteen months, shared the gospel, saw him repent and come to Christ, and was with him when he died. She could have carried that wound from eighteen to a hundred and no one would have blamed her. Mark's question: are there wounds you have let define you that God wants to set you free from?

The test, and the practice

► 1:43:14

Love keeps no record of wrongs — so the test the Bible hands you is a list. Do you keep one? It may have exactly one item on it: the thing they said, or did, or did not do. When that person comes to mind, is your heart pricked with pain? Do you rehearse the speech you would give them?

► 1:44:06

“Unforgiveness is like a prison that you put yourself into. You're not really imprisoning them... they're going to keep living their life.” The way out runs back through the cross.

“...by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.”

COLOSSIANS 2:14 ↗

► 1:44:57

Mark asked who wanted more of the supernatural in their life, and then made his claim: nothing in Scripture is more supernatural than this. He wants to see healing and words of knowledge as much as anyone, and forgiveness is not a lesser item on that list. Which means every time you are struggling to forgive, that struggle is an invitation to get with God and let the source of forgiveness melt your heart.

The practice is plain. Choose to forgive them. Pray for them —

“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” — and watch what praying does to your own heart until you genuinely want them blessed. Ask God to bless them. Release them, as many times as it takes, and do not stop. He quoted John Wimber on why any of this is urgent: “Now is the only time in all of eternity that we get to live by faith.”

► 1:47:29

On repetition he told on himself. Going into sabbatical in 2010, unsure what was next, he took on a discipline against his own compulsive forward-scanning: every time his mind ran to the future, *nope, not for now*. He set an end date, arrived at it having done well but not perfectly, extended it, and by the end was simply living — Lord, what do you have for me today? The same muscle applies here, because our tendency is to pick a thing back up after we have put it down.

Come to me

► 1:48:24

Some people have carried bitterness so long they no longer know how to be rid of it. Mark's word to them was that God can speak directly to that place. He added a caution he did not want taken as the main motive: sometimes blessing is held back in a life simply because something is still being held. You get frozen at the event instead of set free. He closed by reading Jesus' own invitation over the room, so that a heavy message would not land as a weight:

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

MATTHEW 11:28-30 ↗

“So, let's go out and start a fiery frenzy of forgiveness.” Matt Ryniker then called the Heart Ministry teams forward to pray, and reminded the church of Karen Goldapp's message seven weeks earlier, which named therapy as a real option for anyone stuck in exactly the place Mark had been describing.

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- Matthew 6:12–15
- John 14:15
- Matthew 18:21–22
- Matthew 18:32–35
- Romans 12:19
- Genesis 39:20–21
- Genesis 50:19–21
- 1 Corinthians 13:5
- Colossians 2:14
- Matthew 5:44
- Matthew 11:28–30

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Mark said Jesus assumes we have forgiven rather than commanding it. What changes if forgiving is the door you already walked through rather than a later assignment?
2. The parable's numbers are nine billion against ten thousand. Where has your sense of proportion slipped — what debt owed to you feels larger than the one God cancelled?
3. Take his test honestly: when a particular person comes to mind, what surfaces first, and do you have a way of telling the story that always manages a dig?
4. Joseph could name what his brothers did as evil and still release them. Where do you need to stop softening what happened in order to stop carrying it?
5. Mark's practice was to forgive, pray for the person, ask God to bless them, and repeat as many times as it takes. Who is that person this week, and when will you start?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Mark Proeger was welcomed to the Hope Chapel pulpit on September 20 to speak on forgiveness, a message he titled “As We Also Have Forgiven.” He and his wife Ceci are approaching twenty-four years of marriage. He served in college ministry before taking a sabbatical in 2010, and he spoke openly of a decades-old offense he still brings back to God in prayer whenever it surfaces.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3YFavOi5TeY&t=4044s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.