

the destruction of bitterness and unforgiveness

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- [0 : 00] Good morning and greetings to all of you. In Jesus' name, I'm blessed to be here and blessed to some of you that were sick this past week.
- I think all three of our sons were sick, and especially Tony. I'd say he was probably very sick. But God heals and restores, and I know some of the others were as well.
- It's a blessing to be here. I'd like to just bring a message, a word, maybe a word of...
- You could look at it as more of a negative subject, but I don't think it is. If God's in it and brings deliverance, nothing's negative when God's in it.
- But I'd like to talk this morning about bitterness and to guard against bitterness. And just look at some of the things that I guess that maybe the Lord has showed me over the years or whatever.
- [1 : 22] But you can turn your Bibles to Matthew 18. We won't actually read there right away, but you can turn your Bibles there.
- I just want to comment on one song that we sang this morning about we have an anchor. And as we were singing that song, I thought, well, we know this.
- We know that when the waves come and things flood into our life that aren't good or whatever, we know that we have an anchor. But sometimes we don't know it, it seems like.
- We know it, but we don't. And then I got this picture of the disciples when they were in a boat and the storms came, literally. And they had the Savior right there with them.
- But they didn't know it either, did they? They didn't trust at that moment. And so I guess knowing it and believing it, that we have an anchor, even though the storms are rough, is crucial, and especially on this subject.
- [2 : 37] And sometimes we see firsthand how destructive that bitterness can become in a person's life.
- I'd like to look at some of the causes. And I by no means have it all figured out or understand how it all works.
- And I'll probably just kind of touch the surface a little bit of this subject. But we want to look at some of the causes of what causes bitterness and then look at the tragedy of it, too, unless it's repented of.
- And then we also want to look at the solution, obviously. What is the solution to not become bitter? Think with me about some of those things.
- What causes a person to become bitter in their heart? Some of the most tragic things happen to people. And it can be so devastating that it becomes hard for them to forgive because of all the pain that they have.
- [3 : 58] The first one I want to look at, there's only four here, I believe, this morning that will, four or five. But the first one is abuse.
- Many people today have been abused. We might be able to say most people, actually, if you think about it.

This can be sexual abuse, verbal, physical, and mental. When we have been violated and hurt in these areas, it takes the grace of God to be able to forgive the person or people that have done these things to us.

Only when we truly see Jesus can we forgive from our hearts. From our hearts.

You know, we can make a mental choice. But when we have Jesus, we can truly forgive and release from our hearts. And then only can we be truly free.

[5 : 09] We know that bad things happen to good people. I actually have a book that somebody gave me. I haven't read it yet.

But the title is, Why Bad Things Happen to Good People. Written by a man that lost his son. And he had such a burden for that.

And it was a question in his mind that it gripped him so much that he wrote a whole book about it. My brother gave it to me and he said, It's a really good book. But bad things happen to good people.

It's not always our fault. Often it's not our fault what happens to us. Especially when you think of children. And there's a...

I don't remember who said this. It's not original with me. But I think my wife had told me about it. There's a saying that I want to quote here.

[6 : 12] Maybe throughout a few times. Throughout the message here. But the saying goes that God is just not fair.

But he is just not fair. Put a comma in there. God is just not fair, people say.

But he is just not fair. So he's right. But he's a just God. Thank you. And sometimes, think about it.

We were raised, many of us, in good homes. Not perfect homes. But good homes. We had a good life. Why?

Did we deserve that? More than our neighbor who was maybe severely abused all his or her life? What's the difference?

[7 : 13] Why did I have a good home and they didn't? You know, think about those things. But God is just. And we want to talk about forgiveness then and unforgiveness here in Matthew.

The next one that I thought of is jealousy. This is a big monster that can be difficult to even detect.

But it's a big one. Jealousy. When we become jealous of someone we often end up becoming bitter at that person.

We cannot rejoice when that person succeeds or when it goes well with them. We may not understand why but we may have become bitter.

Jealousy is a powerful tool of the enemy and will destroy old churches if it is not repented of. Jealousy is a really bad one for us to become jealous of somebody else.

[8 : 23] The Bible speaks about that. We just can't accept another person. Even if they're good people.

If we're jealous. We wish we had what they have. Or we wish we had the talent they have. And we're just not satisfied with how God made us.

Jealousy. Another really big one and this one goes is very similar to abuse is rejection. This is the cause for so many that have become bitter.

The feeling of rejection. But if we consider Jesus we might get a glimpse of how he may have felt when he was here on earth.

Ever thought about that? You know we read things like they didn't hear him in his own town. They wouldn't accept him. They wouldn't believe on him.

[9 : 31] They said is this not just Joseph's boy? You know they didn't accept him for the son of God. They rejected him. They mocked him. He knows all about rejection.

He experienced it. And yet he died for him anyway didn't he? He gave his life for them too so they would be redeemed if they believed.

Even the ones that nailed him to the cross. Rejection. But it is a very painful thing. He was despised and hated.

And yet he was their creator and he came down to save them. Young people often need to work through this one. feeling rejected.

Maybe by friends, peers. They're just not as popular. Right? And it hurts at times. You see others just seem to get along with everybody.

[10 : 37] And they're just popular and well liked. And me, I'm just a nobody. You know, you know, but those ones that are so popular and so cool and all those things, they probably have issues too.

You just don't know it. They're probably struggling as well. But think about Jesus and the rejection he faced.

I believe that it's good and right for the church to have answers for these things.

And we need to be there for those issues that people face. Those of us that have walked with God and have matured in Christ, we need to have answers.

We need to be fathers and mothers to those that are struggling in these areas. I believe God is calling us to that, to help people through and to work through those difficult things.

[11 : 48] Jealousy and rejection and abuse. And if the church can't do it, who can? The society around us, they're not going to help they try.

They have programs. But God has a program that works. Absolutely. The next one is unforgiveness. I don't know quite the difference between unforgiveness and bitterness.

I don't know where that line is and when it goes from just being unforgiving to turning into bitterness. but they're very closely related. They're almost the same.

Whenever we can't forgive someone, we are very close to the dangerous cliff of becoming bitter at them. When does it go, I had wrote that question, when does it change from unforgiveness to bitterness?

A couple thoughts on that. When you hear that, when you hear that person's name in a conversation, when you hear that other person's name or you come in contact with that person and you can't wait until he or she moves on and is out of the picture or out of the conversation, it just makes you uncomfortable.

[13 : 21] You don't want to talk about that person. You don't want to be close to them. You might have become bitter at them. Now, if it's someone, I want to bring out a balance here, if it's someone that is difficult or just unhandy to be around or annoying or obnoxious, I'm not talking about that.

There are people like that. You know, it's hard to have a conversation with or just maybe have a mean streak or whatever. I'm not talking about that where it's unpleasant to be around.

There are people like that. And I'm not saying that you're automatically bitter at them. You know, sometimes you just wish you were fishing or doing something else versus talking to this person that you're stuck with.

And they need a personality adjustment, right? So, I'm not talking about that. But when it's somebody that's just a normal person and you just don't want to hear the name and you just don't want to be around them because of something that happened in the past maybe or they've wronged you and you're having a hard time to forgive, you might be bitter at them.

Many of the men and women that we have met in prison are very bitter at the people that wronged them. So much so that they believe they are justified in their own wrong and the reason they're in prison.

[15 : 03] Many of them. They're in prison because they did something, maybe committed murder or they did something very bad because of the hurt that they experienced, the rejection or the abuse or whatever it was.

So, there they are in prison, justly so, but they feel justified because of what had been done to them. Maybe a father or a mother that was controlling or somebody usually in their own family.

And this is actually, this thing of forgiveness is one of the greatest ministries in prison to help them find forgiveness. When that happens and when they can just let it all go and pray through and forgive whoever has wronged them, we for the most part have been protected from many of the pain and the abuse that happens to a lot of these inmates.

But many of them, hundreds of them, are in prison because they were wrongfully used themselves. and in turn, they wrongfully used somebody else.

And they hardly ever stop to think about how they've been wronged themselves until they see Jesus. Then it begins to settle in that they themselves are also abusers.

[16 : 50] But when you can get them to come to Christ and to pray through, even after they're born again sometimes, they need to come to that place where they can forgive yet another person.

Totally forgive and get rid of the bitterness. They open their heart and they forgive that person that has violated or abused them. The freedom and joy that replaces that unforgiveness and bitterness is a glorious thing.

It's a glorious thing to witness. I know the ones that go in and do this program, it's called bondage to freedom. A lot of the older men that come in after we were there with the gospel express and so on with going in and witnessing, there's men and women that come back later and they sit down one-on-one and help inmates work through some of this.

And a lot of it is with bitterness. I'd say most of it. And their testimony, it is a very addicting thing to them. It's very addictive because of what they experience, the freedom that they find.

The devil will use a bitter person to bring destruction and every evil work into a home and into a marriage and into a church or wherever God wants to be in charge of.

[18 : 18] the devil will use that bitter person to bring destruction. It is a deadly poison that will destroy everything in its path.

Only God can bring deliverance from these kinds of sins of the heart. We have seen the devastation that comes with these things and it is hard sometimes to pick up the broken pieces.

Now let's go to Matthew chapter 18. I believe you're already there, right? Matthew 18. And we'll just read most of this.

At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him and set him in the midst of them and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

[19 : 42] But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he drowned in the depth of the sea.

Woe unto the world because of offenses. For it must needs be that offenses come, but woe to the man, that man, by whom the offense cometh.

When I read this, I thought about that young man that drowned down in, where was that, Joe? Guatemala? They found his body 473 feet down, I think.

And he didn't have a millstone around his neck. But can you imagine where you would go in the depth of the sea, the sea, the ocean, or whatever that's the deepest and you had a big millstone rock around your neck?

Jesus said it's better for you to go there than, I guess, to face the wrath of God is how I take that. When we offend a child or a young believer, when we cause them to stumble, Jesus did not neglect to warn the offenders.

[20 : 57] He said, woe unto them. But I thank God that even the offenders can be forgiven when they repent.

Amen? The blood of Jesus will forgive to the uttermost. Think of how Saul offended and destroyed young believers, Christians.

He raised havoc in the church. But look at what God did for him. He saved him to the uttermost. He changed him into the apostle Paul that wrote much of the New Testament.

So, some people are so hard on offenders that they have no hope for them. They're just done with them. But those offenders have hope too, if they repent, that is.

But if they don't, then they face God on judgment day. Verse 8, wherefore, if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off and cast them from thee, it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maim rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.

[22 : 14] And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee, it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.

So much for those people that don't believe in hell or a real, this doesn't say into hell, it says into hell fire.

The other one is everlasting fire. Explain that if you don't believe in eternal punishment. Verse 10, take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my father which is in heaven.

Can we let our minds go there a little bit this morning and just think about this, the seriousness of offending a little one. He's talking I believe about children.

To offend a child, to cause a child to stumble or maybe to have these things that we were talking about earlier. it says that in heaven, wait a minute, yes, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my father which is in heaven.

[23 : 41] Their angels? What's he talking about? Is Jesus saying that our little children with us here today have their angels in heaven beholding the father, the face of my father?

Before we yell at a child, let us remember their angels are witnessing everything. Let us be Christ to our and all children.

Let us never be an offense to them. Jesus is warning us, all that read this, to be careful how we treat children because he has a very special place in his heart for children.

Amen. verse 11, for the son of man is come to save that which is lost.

Yes, he came to save that which is lost even while he was rejected and hated. How think ye, if a man have a hundred sheep and one of them be gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and goeth into the mountains and seeketh that which is gone astray?

[25 : 13] And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

Even so, it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. Again, Jesus' heart coming back and saying that his Father in heaven has a heart for these little ones.

moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between them, thee and him alone.

If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. He's changing the subject slightly here. I don't know. Are we finished with that thing about little children?

children? It just really gripped me as I was reading this. And I know that I imagine every dad in here, if we're honest, we'd say, yeah, we've failed in that.

[26 : 25] We've failed. I don't know about you mothers, but we've probably failed our children in that area. And thank God there's forgiveness. Children are very forgiving.

But let us make sure that our heart is right. Causing to offend. It's not just being cruel.

It's also, let me put it this way. If I withhold what God wants me to be to my children, it might not be anything harsh.

Maybe I just neglect them. Pretty simple. I'm not being a bad dad, am I? I'm just not spending time with them, or I'm just not doing what God called me to be.

That is also a form of abuse. God will not forget that unless we repent.

[27 : 35] I always have to add that unless we repent, right? With true repentance, God will cleanse. Verse 16, going back to our brother here, but if he will not hear thee, then take two or three, I'm sorry, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established.

And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church. But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

Yes, this morning I'd like to just say that when it comes to that, you have a problem with somebody and you take another brother with it because he won't hear you, and eventually you just say it to the whole church.

Jesus is saying that there is a need and a time and a need that we need to hear the church. And if we don't, then we're considered a heathen man and a sinner.

It says the Republican in King James. But there is something to not hear the church. And this is Jesus' teaching.

[29 : 00] I thought about this a little bit. You know, when did the church start? Don't we usually say it started in that upper room when the Holy Spirit came Pentecost?

And I believe that. But Jesus is teaching here and he's talking about the church. He already had a church. Maybe it wasn't fully what it was meant to be and going to be, but he had a church.

And even then he was giving this teaching. Verse 18, Verily I say unto you, whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Again I say unto you that if two or three, or no, I'm sorry, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. That's a verse that often gets misused.

[30 : 17] A lot of people use that as saying, well, you know, if there's just me and you get together and we get together Sunday morning and worship, it's all we need for church.

God's there, so what else? We don't need Joe, right? We just, but people use that verse to excuse themselves from not going to church, basically.

That's not what he's talking about. He's talking about, in fact, he just got done saying that if you neglect to hear the church, that, you know, you're not even a Christian.

And so, I believe that what he's saying that God commands his blessing when there's agreement, when there's spiritual agreement, and it only takes a few to make that agreement and say this is what God is saying.

This is what God's telling us. And it's not an excuse to not go to church, is what I'm saying. Verse 21, then came Peter to him and said, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him?

[31 : 30] Till seven times? I don't know if Peter had something going on or if he just had a question. I'm not sure, doesn't say. It could have been that he got tired of forgiving somebody and he's like, okay, surely seven times is enough.

And we would maybe think even that might be common sense. I don't know. How do we think about that? But Jesus said unto him, I say not unto thee until seven times, but until 70 times seven.

that's 490 times. By that time you lost track, right?

Who's going to keep track up to 490 times that you had to forgive? So basically we just have to forgive. Thank you Lord for giving us that word.

Verse 23, therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. Now this is, I wanted the other part of the chapter here, but this is really the part that I wanted to focus or zero in on.

[32 : 48] Jesus said, 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, 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 to be made.

In other words, he couldn't pay the king. So he did what was right. We'll just sell it all and then I'll just take whatever's left.

I'll just take the money. Even himself and his wife. In other words, they're going to be slaves. Sell them. Sell everything he has.

The servant therefore fell down. Can you imagine the desperation that this servant had? He fell down and he worshipped him saying, Lord, have patience with me and I will pay thee all.

Then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion and loosed him and forgave him the debt. Remember who's talking here. Jesus is giving this story.

[34 : 09] That king forgave him the debt. Verse 28, But the same servant went out and found one of his fellow servants which owed him a hundred pence.

And he laid his hands on him and took him by the throat saying, pay me that thou owest. Now I don't know, I know some of you probably have figured up in today's dollar the difference between the hundred pence this man owed him versus what he had owed which was what?

Ten thousand something? Ten thousand talents. And that versus what this man owed was like a drop in the bucket.

Do you know? Anybody know? It was a drop in the bucket. That we know. Like just a tiny bit. He grabbed him by the throat and said, you pay me.

So when his fellow servant fell down at his feet just like he had, he fell down at his feet and besought him saying, have patience with me and I will pay thee all.

[35 : 28] And he would not, but went and cast him into prison till he should pay the debt. Now how does that work? I've wondered about that and I guess this is Jesus' story.

But he threw him into prison and I'm like, how is he going to pay from there? But when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry and came and told unto their Lord all that was done.

Then his Lord, after he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt because you asked me, just because you desired.

Shouldest not thou have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his Lord was wroth and delivered him to the tormentors till he should pay all that was due him.

And then Jesus said this, this is the lesson, so likewise shall my heavenly father, do also unto you if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

[36 : 45] Listen, unforgiveness and bitterness according to these scriptures are not an option for Christians because the wrath of God is coming for all that don't forgive.

forgive. That is, I don't know a more clear scripture to use or to give than this one about unforgiveness.

You know, we look at it as kind of an optional thing, right? We look at it sometimes as, well, maybe I can someday, but for right now, I'm not going to forgive.

And Jesus said, it's not, you know, it's not that maybe somebody owes us money, even though that could be the case, but it's not that necessarily.

Jesus turned this, when he was done with this story, he said, after this king had delivered him to the tormentors, I hate to think what that was like, until he should pay all that was due him.

[37 : 54] So, likewise, my heavenly Father, he will also do this unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother the trespasses.

In other words, it's just something in your heart. You know, it might not be, maybe it was just words. Maybe it was one of those other things, those, something abusive, or rejection, or whatever all those things were there that we were talking about.

And we've held that unforgiveness just in our heart. It's not like anybody even really knows it. Right? But Jesus said, if you don't forgive from your hearts, your heavenly Father will throw you to the tormentors as well.

That's why I say it can't be an option for us. Who are some of the people that can cause us to hold a grudge and unforgiveness?

And as I was just thinking through this this morning, I wrote down some of them, but it can certainly be apparent. Often it's a parent.

[39 : 17] It can be a church leader or churches as a whole. Many people are bitter at a church. It can be a brother or sister or a close friend.

It's usually somebody that we had trusted at one time, and that trust was broken. And many times it's more in our own mind than its reality.

Many times it's how we think, and it's worse in our mind than it really is. You know, the devil does tricks to us, and he tries to control our mind and our thoughts.

How about a marriage partner? this happens a lot, even in Christian circles. You know, the love of your life, the person you thought you knew better and trusted more than anyone else in your life, has betrayed you or misused you.

The pain of this rejection is so great, you just don't know how to forgive. And you need help to find freedom in Christ. Christ. But you can rise above all of that and be gloriously set free.

[40 : 51] I'm going to share this, that in this past week I spoke with a brother, several times actually, someone that had a good marriage, Christian marriage, at least as far as they know, until his wife had a born again, quote born again experience.

And it was the spirit that entered her, but it was not the Holy Spirit. I'm convinced of that. because now everything that the husband or the church does and says is wrong.

And it's become a very miserable marriage. She has listened to other voices that are in disagreement with the church and her husband, mostly doctrinally.

And she will only submit to God, not to anyone else, including her husband. what a deception. And this is what, you know, and this caution needs to be there that he too doesn't become bitter.

you see how the devil works to destroy. He is a thief, he is a liar, he steals and kills and destroys.

[42 : 32] And this man, a preacher, can no longer be used in the kingdom of God as far as being effective in ministry. ministry. And I'll say this, we cried together and we prayed together for God to intervene in their marriage.

And I do believe that someday God will restore fully. I really believe that. God will do something more beautiful than they can ever imagine for his glory.

But she will need to choose to forgive. She'll need to repent. But you see how God, when we, when the devil wins in bitterness, there's just no glory.

It's like a shameful thing. And there's no glory there anymore for God. I want to share a testimony for you younger ones. This is my personal testimony.

I don't even know if I ever shared this with my children. I think I did, maybe. But when I was in school, very young, another, a friend of mine, just a mutual friend, he wasn't really a close friend, but he lied about me.

[43 : 57] And I was completely innocent in this. I wasn't innocent, but I was innocent in this. And I don't know how old I was, probably, probably 12, 12 or 13 maybe.

And I don't even remember what it was about. But he lied about something and it got out to the teacher. It came to my dad and my dad wasn't, he didn't believe me either.

And he laid out the punishment, which was a very long-term, very harsh punishment, if he finds out that it's true.

And so it's my word against his. And I don't remember how long it took, but I insisted that it wasn't true and then I left it there.

And somehow, after maybe a week or a couple weeks, it came out that he had lied.

[45 : 02] And I think he actually might have confessed it. I'm not sure, but I remember, I remember kind of a feeling of bitterness. Like, I just did not like this guy.

And then one day, one afternoon in school, I'm sitting there and it was quiet and I looked at him and he was doing his work.

And I just remember my heart started turning. Like, God turned my heart. And I looked at Laverne, is his name, and I thought about his life and I wondered how it is in his shoes.

Kind of looked down on. We were more whatever. Maybe not as looked down, but he was. He was a little different in some of his ways and so on.

And I just remember, the main part I remember is God giving me a love for him. And thinking, you know, when I thought about walking in his shoes, I'm like, no, I'm happy where I'm at.

[46 : 18] And I don't know, but as I was thinking about that this morning, I thought, you know, maybe that was when God, maybe God allowed that.

I believe he did. He allowed that incident to happen to teach me something. Maybe a life experience, actually. To always try to put yourself in somebody else's shoes.

And think about their life. Think about their hardships. And it will help you to overcome that, how you feel about them.

And then, of course, you can pray. And this is even outside of, I wasn't born again. I was very young. But I never forgot that lesson. And to this day, what, 40 years later, almost, we're still friends.

Or still, I'd consider him a good friend. Let's turn our Bible for a verse or two in Ecclesiastes chapter 12.

[47 : 30] I just want to look at a couple more verses here. And look at the whole duty of man. In chapter 12, verse 13, it says, Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter.

Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.

Every secret thing. Everything that's in our heart that only God can see, for the most part. God is going to bring that to judgment, whether it's good or whether it's bad.

Now, a few verses in Micah chapter 6. Micah 6, verse 6. Wherewith shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the high God?

Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Like yearling calves, something valuable. Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams or ten thousands of rivers of oil?

[49 : 02] He went from several calves to the question, how about thousands of rams? How about ten thousands of rivers of oil?

If I could give that. Or if I, shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

In other words, what can we do? What else could the Lord require of us than that?

What more? And then in verse 8. He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, and what does the Lord require of thee? Here it is. But to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.

That's all. To do justly, to do right, to love mercy. Are we merciful? And to walk humbly with our God.

[50 : 18] Not proud of who I am and what I have accomplished, but to walk humbly with our God. So what is the best, and what is the greatest solution to these things?

This thing of unforgiveness and having bitterness. And you know, I can honestly say this morning that I don't know anyone here that has either.

I don't know that. But after this past week, I've felt that burden that maybe we don't know our own hearts sometimes.

Maybe I don't know if I have it. And I just need to look at this. So I want you to know that this message is very much for me as well, this thing of bitterness and unforgiveness.

Let's turn to Philippians yet, chapter 2. Very familiar passage here in Philippians 2, verse 1.

[51 : 29] If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels of mercy, oh yes, when we have mercy, it comes from the inside, doesn't it?

Bowels of mercy. Verse 2. Fulfill ye my joy that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord and of one mind. Obviously, this brings joy, not only to us, but to Christ.

Fulfill ye my joy, he said. Verse 3. Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves.

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. The love of Christ in the church body.

Taking care of each other, making sure that our needs are all men. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.

[52 : 53] And being found in fashion, as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven, and things in the earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings.

What's disputings? Is that arguing? Do all things without complaining and arguing? That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.

Wow. Wow. That last verse. Are we not in a crooked and perverse nation? Is this our testimony?

[54 : 27] Is this our life? What are we willing to do? What are we willing to change to become this kind of a Christian?

Where we're without rebuke. Sure, we'll be persecuted, we will be disliked by evil people, but that we may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God.

You see, when we look unto Jesus, we meditate on him. And when he reveals who he is to us, and we see his holiness, then we begin to see ourselves in our own sinfulness.

We begin to see what we needed to be forgiven for. We see ourselves as that person in the Bible there in Matthew 18 where the king forgave him all that debt.

We have so wronged a holy God. And I believe this is the answer for forgiveness, really, is to see our debt, to see who he is, and then we begin to see who we are.

[55 : 53] Yes, life isn't fair. We can't help those things that were done as far as when we were mistreated.

Those things were not our fault. Not usually. The people that have done wrong to us were wrong. But we can allow God to heal us and to cleanse us.

David said, create in me a clean heart. Renew a right spirit within me. Because when we become bitter, God receives no glory from our life.

And God can't use us anymore for his purposes. That's why I believe that marriage needs to be restored. He needs to be healed.

I believe it's God's will and his plan. There's many more things that I could say about this, but we'll just allow God to speak his word, his life to us.

[57 : 13] I don't know. I don't know where we're at. Is there somebody we need to forgive? On the way to church, I was thinking about that.

Are there a few people that maybe I need to forgive yet? I don't think I'm bitter. I don't think I'm bitter. But do we need to forgive?

Let's pray. Father, we just come to you this morning. Lord, we thank you for your word. Thank you for teaching us, Lord, about your word and about the heart of God and what you think about a heart of unforgiveness, a heart that's perhaps become bitter.

Lord, that you would just reveal yourself to us, Lord, and that you would show us your purity and the victory that you had, Lord, when you were here, the rejection you went through, the torture, the pain, the abuse that you went through, and yet you forgave freely.

Lord, if we are in that bondage of unforgiveness, Lord, I pray that you would set us free by your spirit, Lord, that you would show those things to us, those things that we can't see on the outside, but you see them on the inside.

[58 : 49] And, Lord, if we're ugly inside, I pray, God, that you would make all things beautiful in your time, Lord. Just help us.

Help us to see Jesus. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Just one more thought. Amen. And maybe you thought of this today already, but we hear the statement or the saying that having, is it having unforgiveness or bitterness is like drinking poison and hoping the other person dies.

But if we have it, we're the ones drinking the poison. May God bless each one of you. Amen. Amen.