

The Withering of the Fig Tree

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[0 : 0 0] This, there we go. Good morning. How's everyone doing? Let's try that again. How's everyone doing? Awesome. One more time. Well, it's been a while since I've been up here, actually. I kind of took a break over the summer. We had a pretty intense springtime, you know, trying to find that pastor and all, you know, that took a lot of work and praise the Lord. God brought us his man. Pretty cool. And it was a blessing that I did that because with Kathy losing her dad and a number of things going on, I think God kind of prepared us, had that happen for a reason. So we're going to be continuing our study of the Gospel of Mark. Boy, I've been so blessed and so thankful to be able to study this book and so blessed to hear from Pastor Tim.

And from what God gives him each time he teaches. Pastor John, what God gives him each time he teaches. Powerful stuff. Just so thankful for that. Today we're going to be looking at chapter 11, verses 12 through 25. You're welcome to turn there in your Bibles or devices.

It's a somewhat controversial text. It's a somewhat controversial text. It was kind of interesting. I was talking to Pastor John Hopkins this week and we were talking about this particular text and he said, boy, I'm glad I didn't have to teach on that text.

So I'm like, great, thanks. He's the full-time guy. Anyway. But I've had a lot of fun studying this. It's the cursing the fig tree. It's kind of like a destructive miracle almost. But we'll look into it. We'll learn some things about it.

So, before we start, I want to ask you a question. What in our lives bothers God the most? It's just rhetorical.

[2 : 0 6] What is something that we do? A sin that we can so easily fall into and oftentimes live in. Something that we can be very comfortable with even. A sin that we can, as Christians, we can even justify it and feel okay about it.

We can even walk into church, possibly even as we are singing praises to our Lord. It's a sin that can stand in the way of our prayers to God. It can even bring sorrow to our God. Anguish, pain, hurt to our living God.

We're going to take a look at this passage and we're going to learn a little bit about this sin and hopefully help each of us to begin to have victory over this sin.

So, with that, I'm going to read. You can read along with me if you want. The text, Mark 11, 12 through 25. And his disciples heard it.

And they came to Jerusalem.

[4 : 0 6] And they came to Jerusalem.

And they said, And Jesus answered them, have faith in God. Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, be taken up and thrown into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you've received it, and it will be yours. And whenever you stand praying, forgive if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also, who is in heaven, may forgive you your trespasses. Let's pray.

Dear Father, we do thank you so much for your word, God. We thank you for giving us this gift, your instruction manual, your love letter to us, your wisdom to us. We thank you that we can learn about you and learn from you and get to know you better as we spend time in your book. Lord, we ask that you speak to us now today, all of us, each of us, including me. Speak to us, Lord. Help us to learn something, something new, something that we can take with us. Lord, make us different. Make us more like you as a result of today. Lord, we lift up all the others, your people in Dubuque and in the whole world, Lord, that are gathered together, they're learning from you. Lord, speak to each one of them. Help them to be different, in Jesus' name. Amen. All right.

So, some of your Bibles may have a verse 26 also. We read 12 through 25. 26 is not actually in the original text. According to scholars, it doesn't show up in most of the oldest and most reliable manuscripts. So, some of your Bibles may have verse 26, some may not. I'll just read it for you. It says, but if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your trespasses. It's not that there's anything wrong with that particular verse. It's just that it's not in the original in the Gospel of Mark. Now, in the Gospel of Matthew, there's a section similar to this that has that verse. And certainly, it's not contrary to what we know, but it's actually not in the original of the Gospel of Mark, according to scholars. All right. So, this is Jesus' last week on earth.

[7 : 17] It's, it's, it's, you think about it, the Gospel of Mark is 16 chapters. We're only in chapter 11, and he's already, he's already at the last week of his life. So, Gospel of Mark has, there's a lot, a lot of, Gospel of Mark is dedicated to his last week. He's been ministering all over in, all over the country, all over Israel. That's not what I want. Looking for my pointer here.

So, Jesus is, he's, he's been going all over. Occasionally, he's in Jerusalem, but he's been spending a lot of time around here, you know, and he's, he's ministering. All these are small towns that he's been ministering to. And, and, and, as I said, he gets to Jerusalem, but he hasn't really spent a lot of time in, in Jerusalem other than some of the feasts and things. So now, he, he, he, of course, last week, we learned about the, the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. And at the beginning of chapter 11, it says that the disciples drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and to Beth, Bethany. I just want to, I got a map that's kind of a close-up of that area. And so, really, since early in chapter 10, they've been moving towards Jerusalem. All right. And it says Bethphage and Bethany. So, you've got Bethany here, Bethphage, Mount of Olives, Garden of Gethsemane. This is Jerusalem here. And you can see the temple there. Archaeologists believe that the population of Jerusalem at the time of Jesus was right around 50 to 75,000. They're, they're varying accounts, but they, they believe it was somewhere around 50 to 75,000 people, about the size of Dubuque in population.

Obviously, people lived a little differently. They didn't have suburban living. It was, it was much more dense and more, more together. This is actually a model that somebody made of Jerusalem. And you can kind of see just how the buildings and, you know, they were a lot closer together. So it's, it wasn't really like Dubuque, but, but it was around the same population. So again, they're staying in Bethany. And, you know, you see that where they're, they're, they're always, it's kind of their, their place to stay while they're spending time in Jerusalem.

[9 : 45] Bethany, of course, is where Martha and Mary and Lazarus live. So it's likely that they're staying with them. This is about two miles from Jerusalem. So it's kind of like walking from Sageville to Dubuque maybe just, and they're doing that every day kind of thing, just to kind of give us a, a perspective on that. Um, all right. Uh, you know, we've been learning about the, the, the, the author, Mark, and how he oftentimes uses these sandwiches in the structure of, of his writing.

So he'll, he'll kind of put one story right in the middle of another story. Well, the, the beginning and the end are on either side, kind of a sandwich, sandwich structure to help us to understand a principle, to understand something. And I think God just set it up that way, that things happen that way. Um, you know, remember back in, uh, Mark chapter five, we were talking about the raising of Jarius's daughter. And, you know, he came to Jesus and said, my little, my little daughter is dying. Jesus. And so they were like, okay, let's go. Well, then on the way there, they ran into the woman who had the, the bleeding problem. Well, they didn't really run into him. She snuck up behind him and she thought, if I could touch him, I'll be healed. And she was healed. Remember what he said? Your faith has healed you. And then of course, when they finally get to where they were going, Jarius's daughter had died. And, and Jarius's, you know, of course was distraught. And Jesus said, do not fear, only believe, you know, just the woman only believe. So kind of a, um, uh, uh, uh, a sandwich structure to the story to kind of help bring, bring in a point. And we've got that same kind of thing going on here in today's text. So, um, and, and the way in this text, we've got the story of the clearing of the temple and it's right in the middle of the cursing, the fig tree curses it on the way in and then clearing of the temple. And then on the way back at that, they see the tree and the condition of it. So, all right, verses 12 through 14. So here's Jesus and his disciples.

They're on their way in from Bethany to Jerusalem. Jesus is hungry, uh, sees a fig tree in leaf, you know, Hey, fruitful. Wow. Hey, yeah. Goes to the tree and finds nothing.

[12 : 12] So he curses the tree. Uh, a little bit about fig trees. So fig trees were, were commonly used. They, they were, um, there were a lot of fig trees around back then in Palestine. Um, and then

God actually used fig trees oftentimes. You'll see that in, in, uh, the, the writings of the prophets where oftentimes they'll use fig trees to kind of, um, demonstrate or, or, uh, symbolize judgment on Israel. Uh, there were many types of fig trees and some of them would have fruit at different times.

All right. So in, in, in, in a way it exonerates the tree because, you know, it could have been in fruit, but it just wasn't, um, but not quite. So lots of, lots of fig trees. Actually, a fig isn't fruit. I don't know if you knew this.

A fig is actually a flower. It's, they call it an inverted flower and it's, and it's got a bunch of flowers inside and seeds. And I don't know if you, you ever eat a fig, an actual fig and it's crunchy. You kind of crunch on it.

There's, there's, there's seeds in it. Um, excuse me. Figs are very nutritious. They're very good for you. Yeah. Kath and I, we get figs from the natural groceries and we, we eat them. Um, you know, when you get my age, fiber's a good thing, you know?

So, and, um, and they're really good. Um, so you're familiar with Fig Newtons? Remember Fig Newtons? All right. They actually had figs in them and they still do. They don't call them Fig Newtons. They rather call them Newtons.

[13:47] I don't know if you noticed, uh, we, we had hospitality today, so I bought some and we, we had them out there. There's some Fig Newtons. Anyone eat a Fig Newton? What? Ron? I'm not surprised.

Uh, Fig Newtons were invented. Just a side note here. They were invented in 1891. Long time ago. They were, they were developed near Newton, Massachusetts. So that's how they got their name. Uh, the company that developed them would become the National Biscuit Company. And it's been renamed. Anyone know what the name is now?

Nabisco. That's right. Side note. Um, not real important to our lives, but just kind of interesting note. Um, but Jesus did not find any food on the tree. Nothing at all.

So he curses the tree. What did he say? May no one ever eat fruit from you again. Wow. Disciples heard that.

[14:56] What was that? Was Jesus having a, kind of an emotional eruption kind of thing? We're going to learn about that.

All right. Moving on. Mark 11, uh, 15 through 16. Uh, so now Jesus, this is where he comes into the temple. He's overturning the tables.

And, um, um, you know, overturning the tables and, and, you know, wow. What's, what's happening with Jesus, right? He curses the fig tree. Now he comes in and he's, is he having a bad day or what?

What's going on? Um, a little bit about the temple. So the temple, I, I found this image of what the temple looked like.

Then this is Herod's temple. And what you had is you had this huge area around here. And this, this thing was huge. This is like 30 football fields in area.

[15:59] It's, it's 325 yards by 500 yards. Just huge. And you can kind of see these pillars are, are huge. All right. So you had this area who was called the, the court of Gentiles.

All right. And then you had this part right here was called the woman's court. And then you had the, the court of Israel, which is where the circumcised men were able to go.

Okay. They couldn't have any women in there. And then getting closer here, you had, this is called the court of priests right in here. And then you had the holy place. And of course, inside was the holy of holies where we had the, the curtain, that kind of thing.

So, so this is huge. And this is where this was happening, the temple courts, the buying and selling and all that was happening there. It's just, just a huge, huge area. Of course, this was during the Passover.

And so it was drawing people from all over the region. And they were coming to sacrifice for the Passover. Now, it wasn't practical for them to bring their own sacrifices.

[17:05] So, what they, what they had is they allowed, they were allowed to purchase animals to sacrifice. Of course, they've got different money, you know, and they had to kind of convert their money to the local money, the shekel.

And so they had this, you know, kind of convenient, I could just change my money and I could just buy the sacrifices and I'm all set. Problem was this. The, the, the local temple leaders were charging exorbitant fees for changing the money.

Exorbitant fees. And then they were charging exorbitant prices for all the animals. So they were making all this money off of the, the Israelites, the people coming to sacrifice. And, and it was, it was wrong. It was sinful. And that's what Jesus was, was attacking. It wasn't the Israelites in general. It was the temple leaders. That was, that's what was going on there. Okay. Next passage. So, here it says, and he was teaching them and saying to them, it is not, is it not written?

[18:17] Boy, I do that every time. My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations, but you have made it a den of robbers. Jesus here is pulling from two passages in the Old Testament.

The first part of that is from Isaiah chapter 56, verse 7. The first three quarters of, of chapter 56, it's, it's, it's a passage where, where it talks about God's salvation and kind of an extension of God's salvation to people who formerly were excluded from it.

Foreigners, eunuchs, exiles, even Gentiles. An extension of God's salvation for, for them. Notice it says here in verse 17, my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.

And I'm just going to read you the context of where that verse appears. This is Isaiah 56, verses 6 through 8. And it says, And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it and holds fast my covenant, these I will bring to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer.

Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar. And here's our verse. For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

[19:56] The Lord God who gathers the outcasts of Israel declares, I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered. Of course, he's referring to his son there.

I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered. Powerful stuff. This is the gospel. This is the good news of Jesus Christ, isn't it?

You know, going back to Mark in chapter 13, Jesus says, And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations.

To all nations. This was the purpose of the temple. It was called the court of Gentiles for a reason. This was the purpose. Of course, this goes against the expectations of the Jewish leaders.

I mean, they, you know, they're the ones. They're the, we're the ones. We're the favorite ones kind of thing. But, you know, God was inviting others to join. That kind of thing. All right.

[20:58] What's going on here? The second part of that references Jeremiah 7, 11. It's a section that talks about the, the, God's declaring the evil in the nation.

And, and it's where he talks about the den of robbers. The den of robbers refers specifically to the financial improprieties of the temple leaders.

Exactly what we're talking about. So he's, he's saying, you know, this is supposed to be, you know, welcoming people to, for prayer. And you've made it a den of robbers.

You're robbing, you're robbing people. And, of course, they heard it. They heard him say it. Just like the disciples heard him talk, cursing the tree. They heard this. And then they were seeking a way to destroy him.

And, of course, we've seen that throughout Mark. That comes up, I think, since the second or third chapter. They've been seeking to destroy Jesus. Again, we're, we're in his last week. They feared him because of all the people.

[22:03] All right. Back to Bethany. All right. So next morning, they're on their way back. And what do they see? Fig tree withered to its roots.

Recall what Jesus said. Remember what he said? May you, talking to the tree, may no one ever eat fruit from you again. And his disciples heard it.

Herein lies the controversy, of course, of this passage. There was a 20th century British philosopher by the name of Bertrand Russell.

He wrote a book called Why I Am Not a Christian. And he pointed to this text as a reason for him not to be a Christian. He called this incident, this story, he called it vindictive fury.

He accused Jesus of vindictive fury for blaming the tree for not producing figs out of season. Even some Bible scholars have had problems with this text over the years.

[23:12] A scholar by the name of T.W. Manson, he called this story a tale of miraculous power wasted in service to ill temper.

This was a Bible scholar. Well, the earliest commentary on the Gospel of Mark was written by a guy named Victor. Victor of Antioch.

It's the 5th century. He wrote a commentary on the Gospel of Mark. And he understood this as what he called an enacted parable. You also could call it an object lesson.

And again, Mark's sandwich structure, where he's got the clearing of the temple right in with the fig tree, kind of demonstrates that this is all, there's something to this.

There's something behind this, something more to this than simply a man losing his temper. Jesus, of course, is also a prophet, isn't he?

[24 : 18] He's our Savior. He's a number of things, but he's also a prophet. And I believe this, he was demonstrating an object lesson to help to get across a point, get across a principle here.

What he's shown us is the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders, right? They looked to be fruitful, just like the tree.

From a distance, it looks to be fruitful. Get up close, no fruit. Hypocrisy. Temple courts, meant to be for all, you know, flourishing with activity, hypocrisy, but it's a den of robbers.

Hypocrisy. Great messages for Jewish leaders, right? So, what do we learn from this as Christians? What can we learn from this? How does this apply to us? Well, Jesus gets right to the heart of it here in verse 22. What does he say? I guess I got it.

[25 : 21] Verse off. Oh, I'm not working now. Can somebody advance the slide? It's not. I think my battery's dead or something. That didn't do it.

There we go. Thanks. So, verse 22. Have faith in God. Have faith in God.

Have faith in God. So, you can kill trees too, right? No. No. No. Trust in Jesus. Believe in Jesus.

As opposed to what? How does this all relate to Christians? Have faith in God. As opposed to have faith in yourself.

Right? We can fall into having faith in ourselves, can't we? And not having faith in God.

[26 : 24] It's working now. So, next verse. It says, truly I say to you, whoever says of this mountain, be taken up and thrown into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him.

What does he mean by this? I mean, is he serious here? You think about it. Do you see that ever happening?

Do you know of an instance where somebody commanded a mountain to move, and it moved? I don't know of any. The scholars call this Hebraic hyperbole.

Hebraic hyperbole. He doesn't mean literally, but, you know, through faith in God, we can move mountains, and we all have mountains in our lives, don't we? From time to time, we all have mountains.

We all have mountains in our lives. Do you believe you can move those mountains? Do you believe he can move those mountains for you? Notice this verse says, you can move the mountain.

[27 : 34] Look at the verse again. He's not calling us to pray there, is he? He's calling us to move the mountain. I'm going to read it again.

Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, be taken up and thrown into the sea, and does not down in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him.

All right. He's not saying, ask me to do it. He's saying, you, tell the mountain to move. Says to the mountain, move.

It will be done for him. What did he just say? He said, have faith in God. Have faith in God, right? Through faith in God, we can move mountains.

Does not doubt, believes in his heart, have faith in God. I said earlier, it's not about having faith in yourselves, right? It's not about having faith in your prayers.

[28 : 48] It's about your faith. It's not about your prayers. It's about your faith. We can fall into having faith in ourselves, having faith in our prayers.

But this is about faith in God, trust in God. All right. So what do we mean by that? We kind of, we've talked about this in the past.

The first verse there from Matthew 18, it says, and he said, truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Unless you change and become like little children.

What do we know about little children? They are completely dependent on their parents. Unless you change and become like little children, dependent on our Lord.

That's what he's calling us to do. Next verse says, without faith, it is impossible to please him. It doesn't say without prayers, it's impossible to please him.

[29 : 59] It doesn't say without reading your Bible, it's impossible to please him. It doesn't say without coming to church, it's impossible to please him.

It says without faith, trust, belief, it's impossible to please him. The last verse says, whatever does not proceed from faith, is sin.

Whatever does not proceed from prayer, from reading the word? Whatever does not proceed from faith, is sin.

All right, but what about prayer? God calls us to pray, right? He covers it in the next verse.

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you've received it, and it will be yours. So faith and prayer, of course, go hand in hand, don't they? But it's faith, it's faith, it's trust in God, that's what he's calling us to have.

[31 : 08] Again, like a little child, trust in God, faith in God. James 5, it says, and the prayer offered in faith will make the sick man well.

The prayer offered in faith will make the sick man well. There are times when prayers could be offered not in faith. The Pharisees were famous for that.

They'd be out praying, and letting people see them praying, and of course Jesus condemned them for that. We can do that ourselves.

We can think that it's about our good works, our praying. It's about me spending time with, in the Bible, it's about me spending time at church with his people. But it starts with faith.

It has to come from faith. The reason I pray is because I'm trusting God, because he's my father, and I want to pray to him.

[32 : 12] I want to reach out to him. I want to speak to him. Again, it's coming from faith. The reason I read the Bible, the reason I have a regular time in the word, is because this is God's message to me.

And what does faith look like? It means I'm in his word on a regular basis. I'm reading his word. The reason I come to church, the reason we have Bible studies and things, it's motivated by faith, by trust, by belief.

We're relying on him. That's what we're talking about. All right.

So, the Gospel of John, of course, has verses very similar to this verse.

One of my first ones I ever memorized was, was it John 16, 24? It was a navigator verse. Maybe you know it, Michael. It's the one that says, until now you have not asked for anything in my name.

[33 : 13] Ask and you'll receive and your joy will be complete. Again, he's kind of saying the same thing. There's another verse in 1 John that says this. It says, And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

And if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him. So, again, it's coming from faith. And what does he say?

If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us and we know that we have it. How do we know what's according to his will? How do we know that? How do we know his will?

Well, we get to know his will by getting to know him. Again, he's calling us to a relationship with the living God. As we spend time in his word, again, in faith, spend time in his word, we get to know him better.

As we spend time praying to him in faith, we get to know him better. As we spend time just trusting in his spirit to guide us, to lead us, we get to know him better, we get to know his will.

[34 : 22] As we spend time with each other, Sunday morning, other times, we get to know him better, we get to know his will. Just walking with him through life, we get to know him better.

Matter of fact, we've got an opportunity to move some mountains tonight. We've got a prayer meeting. What time is that at? 6.30, right? 6.30 tonight here at the church.

Bring your mountains. It's a prayer meeting. We're going to pray, and we're going to see God move some mountains. I'd like to invite everybody to join us for that. And again, prayer and faith.

Prayer and faith. So I asked a question at the beginning of the service. I said, what in our lives bothers God the most?

All right, there's a sin that we as Christians can justify, maybe feel okay about, even as we walk into church, possibly even as we are singing praises to the Lord, a sin that can stand in the way of our prayers, that can even bring sorrow to our God, anguish, pain, hurt.

[35 : 33] Verse 25. And whenever you stand praying, forgive if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also, who is in heaven, may forgive you your trespasses.

He wants us to forgive one another. He needs us to forgive one another. Not that he needs, but we need to forgive one another. What does he say?

Forgive if you have anything against anyone. So who does that leave out? Anyone. What offenses does that leave out?

Forgive if you have anything against anyone. Recall the Lord's Prayer. What does he say? In the prayer, it says, Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

So think about it. Unforgiveness. Is that a sin? Unforgiveness? You don't know what he did to me. Or she did to me.

[36 : 42] You have no idea what I've been through. To think that I need to forgive this person. You have no idea. He wasn't even a Christian.

Certainly I don't need to forgive him. What does Jesus say? Forgive if you have anything against anyone.

Or you may say, You know, I can't think of anyone that I have not forgiven. I think I'm all right in this area.

I want to ask you, Is there someone in your life that, As soon as you see them, Or think of them, Or somebody, Hear about them or something, You get this old familiar pain.

And not just a pain, But you have this secret desire That you wish some harm would come to them Because of what they did to you. That's called bitterness.

[37 : 44] And that's called unforgiveness. So can we really fall into this easily? Can we really be comfortable living in it?

Can we justify it? Feel good about it? Can we actually harbor this sin While walking into church? While singing his praises? Yeah, I believe we can.

There might be somebody here in this room That maybe, When I ask that question, That's where your mind went. It's possible. It's very possible.

So how can we, How can this stand in the way of our prayers? How can it bring sorrow or pain to God? Unforgiving. Not forgiving someone.

Let's take a look at Ephesians 4. This is verses 30 through 32. I'm going to read this. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God By whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

[38 : 47] Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander Be put away from you along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, Forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you.

And that's the point, isn't it? That's why it's important to do this. Because it's as God in Christ forgave us.

So we've been talking about Jesus' object lesson with the fig tree. Alright? His object lesson with the clearing of the temple. Exposing hypocrites.

How is unforgiveness hypocritical? Think of Jesus' parable. The parable of the unforgiving servant. I don't know if you remember this. Matthew 18.

You got this servant who owes, the rich man, he owes him 10,000 talents. Alright? That's worth about \$250 million in today's dollars.

[39 : 50] And you remember what happens? Oh, forgive me for this. And the rich man says, Yep, you're forgiven. Canceled. Debt canceled. You don't owe me a thing. Yes. And then he goes to a fellow servant who owes him 100 denarii, which is about \$10,000.

It's not insignificant, but it's not a quarter million dollars. Pay me what you owe. Remember that? And then when this guy finds out, he's like, Okay, forget it, man.

You know? So the comparison of what we owe God or what our forgiveness is worth, quarter million dollars, compared to what that person did to you, \$10,000.

Again, not insignificant. It's something. It's real. And it's huge. But compared to what God has forgiven us. You know? If we're not forgiving, according to this verse, we're grieving the Holy Spirit of God.

This affects every aspect of our relationship with God. We are literally grieving God. We're literally bringing him sorrow when we're not forgiving. So what can we do about it?

[41 : 11] Forgiveness, of course, it doesn't just happen, does it? You can't just say, Hey, I'm, Okay, you're forgiven. And, ah, it's gone. That doesn't work, does it? There's a process to it. And, you

know, we actually studied this a while back in Romans 12.

I'm not going to get into the details. I don't have a lot of time. But there's a three-step process to forgiveness. Step number one is the choice to forgive.

It's just a choice. You're just simply releasing them. In your mind, you're deciding to release them from your desire to want harm to come to them or something, revenge or whatever.

You're just deciding in your mind to release them. And all this is Holy Spirit empowered. You can't do this on your own. You need to, again, in faith, in trust, trust God to help you through this.

Decide to release them. It's a decision. That's step one. Step two is, so that's called forgive. Step one is called forgiving.

[42 : 15] And this is where we start to pray for them. Maybe we bless them. Maybe we send gifts to them or something. Now, obviously you can't do that with everyone because forgiving is different than reconciliation.

You don't, there may be somebody that hurts you and that it's, it's, it's not safe to be near them and you need to stay away from them. That's fine. You can do that but you can still choose to release them.

You can still forgive them. You can still pray for them. And over time, God will change your heart. He'll heal your heart as you're praying for them. Maybe doing good things for them.

and you'll eventually get to step three. Forgive in. That's when you no longer have that. When you think about them, you no longer have that. And it happens.

It works. God is in the process of transforming us, right? And he does it through his spirit and through faith. Three steps.

[43 : 13] Forgive, forgiving, forgiving. Let's pray. Dear Jesus, we, we thank you so much, God, that you are and have the solutions to all of our problems.

Every one of our problems. As John shared, it's, it's not about, just about heaven. You've saved us to a life of joy, of peace, of purpose.

of meaning. Here on earth, you, you entered our lives. You're, you're in, you live in us. You've given us your word. You've given us the blessing of prayer.

You've given us each other. Help us to utilize all these gifts, these resources to get to know you better, to get to know your will better, to learn to love you more.

Help us in the area of forgiveness, God. I believe probably every one of us can think of somebody and could use this. Help us, through through!

[44 : 29] Thank you, in Jesus' name.