

Sins, Trespasses and Offenses

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I heard someone say once that they had never been offended in their lifetime and they boasted that they will never be offended—they just don't get offended. My first thought was that they must live in some kind of a bubble; in some kind of a sheltered life where they are never in contact with anyone. Maybe one of these "preppers" who live on a mountain top where they can see for miles around. Sometimes these "preppers" get so radical they clear all the trees out so they have a clear field of fire, 360 degrees around their hideout. Someone who says they have never been offended must not watch the nightly news. They also must not have kids or grandkids in public school or even worse, in college.

I don't know about you, but in my eighty-one plus years I don't remember more offensive times than we live in right now and it seems to be getting worse. I won't even go there with particulars; the list would be too long and too depressing. If you've lived long enough, sooner or later you're going to have your toes stepped on, you're going to have your nose tweaked, you're going to have your "fruit of the looms" twisted over something. That's just the way it is. In some form or another we have suffered some kind of a hurt or a wrong—we just have. Again, I could run through a personal list of mine, but I think we all have them. I made a short bullet list of all the different places and you can probably relate to some of these in your experiences.

Growing up—school—all the bullying, the fights, the things we would get into in school as kids; all the way through school growing up.

As adults—in our work environment. Ever run into conflicts—anyone who has worked for someone else for a living? Sooner or later, you're going to be on the receiving end of someone's ambition or something. They may be using you as a stepping stone to get to where they want to go and they push you aside; it gets very offensive.

In the military—we had the UCMJ, the Uniform Code of Military Justice. As long as you played by those rules you were fine, but if you violated any of those you would be in big trouble. In other words, you would suffer for offending those rules. I was honorably discharged by the way, by some miracle.

How about in marriage—I don't know about everyone else's marriage but our marriage is full of a lot of "I'm sorry's". Some of the things we've done, we just do that. When you think about marriage, a lot of people don't even bother tying the knot today, they just go on with their lives.

Lastly,

How about in the church? It's unfortunate that there are offenses in the church; of course, we know that. I ran across a thing which said, *when you speak your radar is*

always up for little stories or something like that and this one came from some Christian source. I can't remember exactly where it was from. The question was brought up, why do some of God's children in their Christianity everywhere, have such a difficult time getting along with each other? The author of this recited a little poem. He said that this poem stated it perfectly—for problems in the church are everywhere.

*To live above with the saints we love will certainly be glory.
To live below with saints we know, that's another story.*

I think we can all relate to that one a little bit. Scripturally, and what I'm getting at is, those hurts, those offenses, fall into three categories. You know my title already, it's all over YouTube.

Sins, Trespasses and Offenses

I purposefully made all of those, plural, because they come in a lot of different forms and directions. Because we have to deal with them, I would like to look at each one of these in context and look at what scripture says the correct response should be. How God expects us to handle these, because God does have expectations for us. That's what God is interested in. A lot of things happen to us but God is interested in our response—our emotional response. How we react to something, especially if we react in a negative way. Sometimes, that's hard to do, to react in a good way. My wife and I were talking recently and in our eight decades plus of living, we concluded that everything is a test. I know everybody else figured that out a long time ago, but we were just talking about that recently because it seems like everything is.

The question is, what do all of these mean on a personal level? The first place I would like to start—very familiar scripture—Gail was there recently in Matthew 18:15.

Matthew 18:15 *“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.”*
(NKJV)

We've heard this many, many times dealing with relational problems in the church. It says sins against you, you have to think, wait a minute I thought you could only sin against God? Another translation, the New International says,

“If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault”.

It makes it sound like a generic sin and it kind of confuses the issues. The “sin against you” is correct, it's something that is personal. It's a reference to personal sin, a wrong against someone. In fact, the Amplified for that scripture says,

“If your brother wrongs you, go and show him your fault”.

The meaning of that word for *sin*—again sin, trespass and offense, as we go along you will see sometimes these overlap—for the Greek is Strong's #264 and it's used forty-three times in the King James. It means "to miss the mark, to err in a moral sense".

In the Old Testament, let's go to Genesis 39, We know the context here in Genesis 39:9, Joseph, Potiphar's wife was messing with him. Joseph responded to her.

Genesis 39:9 *There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"* (NKJV)

In the Hebrew it is in Strong's #2398 and occurs 238 times in the Old Testament. It's a primitive root but it means "to miss, figuratively generally to sin". Here's a quote from Zodhiates Word Study: *It's a verb meaning to miss the mark. Remember that as we go along here. To miss the mark is what sin is, to wrong, to sin. It's central meaning is to miss the mark or fail. It is used in a sense to indicate the simple idea of missing or failing in any task or endeavor.* It gives a reference, Judges 20:16; *it indicates the idea of a slinger missing his target.* That's the central idea to sin, to miss the mark. We'll elaborate on that in a little bit.

Continuing the quote from Zodhiates Word Study: *The word is used the most to describe human failure and sin; it indicates failure to do what is expected.* Remember that term too—to do what is expected. *Many times, the word indicates being at fault.* A couple more scriptures they give, I didn't include these but if you want to look them up later, Genesis 20:9 and Exodus 10:1. The article goes on to say: *People can also sin against other human beings.* They cite Genesis 42:22, 1 Samuel 19:4 and 5 *or against their own soul* in Proverbs 20:2.

We can see the point is that *missing the mark* is figurative and if we analyze the context where this word is used, it's in regard to sinning against God or another person. Their target—what the idea, the concept of missing the mark is—in reality, is right relationships. That's the target, that's what we're aiming for. If we sin against God, we break the law, *we miss the mark*, we fail to hit the target which God expects of us in our behavior. We fail to do what is expected of us. In that case we need to demonstrate an appropriate repentance to repair that relationship that we have with God; to be in a right standing with Him. As Rick mentioned, David, when you think of all the things that David did, he had his priorities straight because he knew that his major issue was with God, even with the things he had done to other people. He had committed sin against them and was wrong in that sense. It was a grievous trespass, certainly an offense what he did to the people involved. If you think of it in that concept, it helps to understand that if people totally reject God after having a relationship with Him, they have committed the unpardonable sin by willfully destroying that relationship. That's what the unpardonable sin is; a willful destruction of that relationship we have with God.

We can also sin against another person by failing in a proper relationship with them within the body of Christ. A little more on that later. The word *sin* can also mean

trespass; Matthew 18:15 from the King James version actually translates it this way. If you have ever looked into this—it's a worthwhile word study—the words are used interchangeably.

Matthew 18:15 *Moreover if your brother sins against you [rather than say sin like other translations do], go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. (NKJV)*

The trespass is the same word and has the same meaning. Strong's brings that out as your faults, your sins, your trespass, your offense. Sin can embody all of these concepts; sin, trespass and offenses. Although offense, when you think about the English, our English language is loaded with nuances. Same with the Greek and Hebrew. In Matthew 18 going to verse 6 and 7, we'll see the same word translated a different way.

Matthew 18:6 *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 were drowned in the depth of the sea.*

7) Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! (KJV)

That was the King James, the New King James says:

6) But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin [the word used interchangeably], it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. (NKJV)

Basically, the *offense* means a *stumbling block* and some translations will put *stumbling block*. Whatever trips someone up we would say, leads to sin, in both senses of the word. In the context it's referring to relationships. We have to remember that. In this case, the relationship is between the little ones and Christ and God. Saying that if someone impedes—what Christ is teaching—between Him and the little one—that's the lesson He is teaching—they can damage that relationship on their own, with God. Pretty grievous consequence when we put this together and think about it.

As a summary, we can see the different translations will interchange these three words: Sin, trespass and offenses. They're really concepts that refer to nuances in relationship we have with each other and with God and the things that impact the quality of those relationships. Let's go back to Matthew 18:7. Christ says something that should give us pause, because it tells us something about our human proclivities.

Matthew 18:7 *Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes! (NKJV)*

He's saying like I said in the beginning, if we live long enough, we are going to be on the receiving end—either offending someone, sinning against someone or trespassing

against someone and we'll bring more of that out later, or be offended ourselves in some way.

Another way to describe these categories is, sometimes they can be overt—many sins are. Sometimes they aren't, they are hidden. Or they can be covert—unintentional. For example, if someone gossips about someone, they may think they are meaning no harm, but what if it gets back to the person that you are gossiping about? It can become very offensive. Some are very protective about their privacy. We have scriptures that tell us not to be busy bodies and with good reason. What's the answer to all of this? It has to be scriptural. We can't go to Dr. Phil and get answers, although he might have something to say about these things but in a different way, I'm sure—a secular way. Matthew 18:21-22; a very familiar example that Christ is giving to Peter.

Matthew 18:21 *Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"*

22) *Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. (NKJV)*

You can only imagine Peter's shock. You notice now in these things, in the sins, the trespasses and offenses, forgiveness has now entered the equation. He was teaching someone a very vital lesson in relationships. When we look at that term, when your brother sins against you—*brother* back then for the Jews could be nationally or it could be in a religious sense. Just look at a few scriptures about this. These are references. The point of these—it brings it out when you think of all this, missing the mark, doing what is expected of us—it's talking about relationships. These scriptures like Proverbs 18:19 from the New King James.

Proverbs 18:19 *A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, And contentions are like the bars of a castle. (NKJV)*

From the Amplified, same verse.

Proverbs 18:19 *A brother offended is harder to be won over than a strong city and their contentions separate them like the bars of a castle. (AB)*

From the Complete Jewish Bible.

Proverbs 18:19 *It is harder to win an offended brother than a strong city. Their fights are like bars of a fortress. (CJB)*

When you think about that, these bars are relational barriers that come down between people because of these things. Because of offenses, because of sins, because of trespasses. They are really emotional bars and they are a long way from forgiveness in most cases. Over in Colossians 3:1, a little bit more about this from the New King James.

Colossians 3:1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

2) *Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*

3) *For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*

4) *When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.*

5) *Therefore put to death your members [you can read about members, about your natural impulses, your emotional responses which are on the earth and then it will list a few] which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*

6) *Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,*

7) *in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them ... (NKJV)*

We are supposed to change from that.

8) *But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. (NKJV)*

Do any of those thoughts pass through your mind when you are offended? When you get your toes stepped on? When somebody behind you on the road tries to run over you? That happened to our daughter in law recently; somebody tried to run her off the road. Fortunately, she had dash cams and got it all on camera. Speaking of road rage, we had one recently in our little town of West Richland. Attorney's that deal with those things are one of their most lucrative defense jobs they get—defending someone over road rage.

9) *Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,*
10) *and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him ... (NKJV)*

Things above mentioned in verse 2.

11) *where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. (NKJV)*

You have to think about that for a second. What is it saying when it comes to offenses, trespasses and sin? That they rule out bigotry and prejudice; takes the ethnic thing out of the picture. There's a lot of that. I was watching a movie recently about apartheid in South Africa. That was a horrible thing.

12) *Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; (NKJV)*

The exact opposite of verse 8. And if we do those things, it mentions there—put on those things, in other words think like that, operate like that, behave like that, then verse 13 is the result.

13) bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. (NKJV)

To me that is very much in the context of the days of Unleavened Bread. The point is, it's saying you can't have two different things in your mind. You can't be unforgiving and forgiving at the same time. That's impossible; our human brain won't allow us to do that.

14) But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. (NKJV)

What does that mean? I think the New Living says that better.

14) Above all clothe yourselves with love [agape love] which binds us all together in perfect harmony. (NLT)

It's the catalyst to hold us together. I believe this was brought out with Rick recently and I think all of us recognize Matthew 24 where it talks about the love of many waxing cold. Not much harmony in the church today. Some people are offended because you don't believe the same things they do in the same way—they are offended at that. That's not harmony.

15) And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. (NLT)

You can't have that peace because that is a vital ingredient of forgiveness. When you forgive someone, it will result in peace. We don't have much of that unfortunately and I'm sorry to have to say that. In your heart, if there is animosity and dislike, even hatred going on in your mind, you don't have peace—you don't have peace at all. Look a little more at what Paul says about this in Ephesians 4:31 and 32.

Ephesians 4:31 *Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. (NKJV)*

Malice just means "dislike".

32) And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. (NKJV)

I was thinking about this topic this morning and the differences in God's people in the church—in the world actually—there's no difference really. We are all different, we have God's Holy Spirit, we've been converted, hopefully we behave like we should, but it's

like the game of golf. I play with all kinds of people—doctors, dentists, lawyers, carpenters, plumbers, even with a guy one day who built these wind towers—he’s a really good golfer. A lot of people who built their own businesses. If you really want to find out about one of your brethren, play golf with them. Golf can be very frustrating. What I’m trying to point out is, there are all kinds of golfers with every kind of personality and idiosyncrasy you could name find in people. The church is no exception. When you think about that scripture where it says *the love of many will wax cold*, you would think that converted people—we understand ourselves, which means we should understand other people too—we have the benefit of the understanding that God has given us through His Holy Spirit. It might take us a while but we get there. With that, wouldn’t you think that converted people would cut other people some slack? In or out of the church? Just give the benefit of the doubt? But a lot of times people just don’t do that. People have a problem with it. Paul talked about a problem exactly like that in 2 Corinthians 2. The context we know is the account of the incest here.

2 Corinthians 2:6 *This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man ... (NKJV)*

They put him out—we have that account in 1 Corinthians.

7) so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. (NKJV)

That wasn’t immediate for this whole congregation, the whole congregation was looking down on this individual.

8) Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him. (NKJV)

Change your response, your emotion of dislike, maybe even disgust with this individual.

9) For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things. (NKJV)

He’s teaching what Christ taught.

10) Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ ... (NKJV)

Here’s another ingredient that comes into play.

11) lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices. (NKJV)

You ever notice how hard it is when you are offended or hurt in some way, to get those emotions, those thoughts, out of your mind? Sometimes it’s like on an endless reel of

revenge of how we are going to get even. Think Satan is behind that? Of course, he is, he takes advantage of that. Matthew 5:22-24.

Matthew 5:22 *But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause ... (NKJV)*

Remember these are the beatitudes, where Christ is explaining that He wants that real change in us, from our normal carnal way of thinking.

22 continued) ... shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, Raca! 'shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool! ' shall be in danger of hell fire. (NKJV)

We know that *Raca* is a term made for an “empty head”. It’s an epithet, an insult. It comes from a hurtful enmity and hatred. We might accompany that today with an expletive or two.

*23) Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,
24) leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. (NKJV)*

Talking about getting your heart right. Talking about relational damage control. For reconcile, I looked that up in [Zodhiates Word Study](#) and it just means to change one’s feelings towards another, it’s what it means to become reconciled. Interestingly enough, that word is only used once here in Matthew 5:24. It applies to a quarrel where a fault might be two-sided or one sided, the context usually shows the active individuals. The scripture is clear about two principles regarding forgiveness which is a major component to this whole discussion of sin, trespass and offenses. Those two principles are, we always need to forgive and number two we need to remember, we don’t always achieve reconciliation. We just don’t, it just doesn’t happen. But that doesn’t excuse our responsibility of what God expects from us.

I did look this up online—actually Rick gave a good sermon—on forgiveness. James gave a good one years ago on forgiveness and reconciliation. Part of the point is, it takes me a long time to forgive but we to try to reconcile but sometimes that just doesn’t happen. They say it’s not a how to, but a need to, that’s what we need to do. Sometimes there’s a lot of variables involved. We might not even know we’ve offended someone or trespassed. Trespass in the Greek means pretty much what it means when it comes to your property. There is a line that’s been crossed. That’s what a trespass and offense—these terms overlap, it just depends. Sometimes an offense is unintentional. If you study into the Greek for trespass and offense, you’re going to find several different words that are used. There are nuances to that. The context will usually explain it.

I can think of my past, I'm always getting into trouble with my wife. She always tells me, people don't understand your kind of humor, they don't understand your sarcasm and that's true. I try to explain to her that my humor is a coping mechanism. One time back in the old days—Worldwide days—we had a bulletin board we used at Masonic Temple in Pasco and I put a blonde joke up there one time and thought it was hilarious. 99.9% of the people in there did too, but one lady did not appreciate that joke and when I found that out I quickly removed it. I learned a lesson never to do that again.

Another time, one of the elderly gentlemen that used to attend with us, he's passed on now, we were having normal potluck and he was in line and unfortunately at the head of the line and it was going very, very slow because he liked to closely examine everything and that's okay. But somebody made a comment and it was as harmless as it could be but that individual was so offended, he never once again got in the front of that line, he always made sure he was last. It was unintentional but it was an offense. I think that was resolved between the individuals. The point is we have a responsibility to do our part and hope for the best from the other person and in some cases that's all we can get. A peaceful reconciliation is not possible without forgiveness. Our part in that is brought out in some familiar scriptures. I would like to look at a couple from that angle. In Matthew 6, New King James still, where Christ is teaching—teaching His disciples, teaching us.

Matthew 6:6 *But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.*

7) *And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.*

8) *Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.*

9) *In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.*

10) *Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.*

11) *Give us this day our daily bread.*

12) *And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.*

13) *And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one [Satan is always in the mix]. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. (NKJV)*

We have to remember these are Christ's own words. The beatitudes are a state of mind to be in God's Kingdom really, when you think about that. When you look at verse 12, *forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors*—let's look at verse 14 and 15 because it seems like Christ is saying, I know I just said that, but I don't think you got it so I'm going to emphasize it a bit more.

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

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

In the Greek, *forgive* is Strong's #863 and occurs 147 times in the New Testament. The context will clear it up but what that means is, when you forgive something, "you let it go, you send it away, you set it aside, it's not important and not consuming you anymore with getting even with someone or taking revenge on someone." Back in Matthew 18:35 this time.

Matthew 18:35 *So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses." (NKJV)*

It's an inside out response—a little more on that later. Over in 2 Corinthians 13:11.

2 Corinthians 13:11 *Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, [then he gives instruction] live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. (NKJV)*

What it's saying there is what our obligation and responsibility as God's people is, if there are contentions between us, to relieve those issues. Relieve that tension I should say to achieve that peace. Peace to us is just the absence of war. Absence of conflict but spirituality it means a deep, genuine peace. It's quite different from the generic idea that we have of peace. In Matthew 5:9—don't go there—but they use the word *peace maker* and that's Strong's #1518 and it occurs once. The synonym for that and here's a couple references, Strong's #1517, from Zodiates it's "to cause a state of peace or reconciliation between two persons, to make peace, to harmonize." I mentioned that already. To be a *peacemaker*, the one who having received the peace of God in his own heart, and brings peace to others. Over in James 1:19 and 20.

James 1:19 *So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;
20) for the wrath [that means really ticked off] of man does not produce the righteousness of God. (NKJV)*

Again, we should say that is a completely bad state of mind. That word *wrath* if you look it up means "anger, indignation and vengeance". It doesn't sow peace or anything. In Hebrews 12 there's a little bit more about this. This all adds up, when you put it together with this topic. Hebrews 12:14 and 15.

Hebrews 12:14 *Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:
15) looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; (NKJV)*

We've heard that explained many times but a root is something that festers, it grows and that could be resentment or anger over wrong done to us. It takes root and it grows.

It defiles you because you won't let it go; it's in your heart. You take the position that whoever wronged you or hurt you in some way owes you something. You have an emotional debt and you want payment for that. We are required to forgive or if we don't do that, spiritually it's a train wreck for us. Back over to Matthew 18, from this angle I would like to go through all of Matthew 18—we've heard it many times. It's interesting to me the way this starts out and the way Christ handles it.

Matthew 18:1 *At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (NKJV)*

In a way you have to appreciate the carnal human nature of the apostles at this uncovered point in their life. This shows how carnal ambition manifests itself. I saw it in a corporation that I retired from. There was jealousy, envy, competition and strife. When you look at that, the way that is started and the approach the disciples had, the way Christ handled it was amazing because in verse 2, Jesus used an example—a real life example.

*2) Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them,
3) and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. (NKJV)*

Again, it's a state of mind and using a child—we raised six kids—very often the kids will get in a tiff or do something and they quickly get over it. They just do.

4) Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (NKJV)

Gail mentioned humility.

*5) Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.
6) "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.
7) Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!
8) "If your hand or foot causes you to sin [trespass or offend], cut it off and cast it from you [we know it's not literal]. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire.
9) And if your eye causes you to sin, [that's saying how you look at things, how you respond to things] pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.
10) Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven. (NKJV)*

We think angels do look out for children; how else do they survive.

- 11) *For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost*
- 12) *‘What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying?’*
- 13) *And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray.*
- 14) *Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. (NKJV)*

To me that’s pointing out that God cares about all His people—everyone is important to God. Sometimes, it’s unfortunate, but people look down on other people in the church. Everyone is important to God.

- 15) *Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. (NKJV)*

I like some translations that say you’ve won your brother.

- 16) *But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. ’*
- 17) *And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.*
- 18) *Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*
- 19) *‘Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.*
- 20) *For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.’*
- 21) *Then Peter came to Him and said, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?’*
- 22) *Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. [Then He uses the parable.]*
- 23) *Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. (NKJV)*

We know that the symbolism is, the king is God and the servants are us, His followers.

- 24) *And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.*
- 25) *But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.*
- 26) *The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’*

27) *Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.*

28) *But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; [like a few cents] and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!'* (NKJV)

You see that in gangster movies, they will send out a couple of thugs to collect for them and break a leg—kind of the attitude of this guy.

29) *So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'* (NKJV)

Jumping to verse 32.

32) *Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.'*

33) *Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?*

34) *And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.* (NKJV)

Drives home the point of the parable.

35) *"So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."* (NKJV)

When it says from the heart, that is something deeper. It's more than a half-hearted, "sorry I did that, sorry I stepped on your toes, sorry I called you what I did". It's more than that. God knows the difference and we should know that. The point is, could it be any clearer how important it is to God and Christ how we handle ourselves over these issues. It's very important to Them.

Looking at a personal example—it's not too hard to think of examples in all this—I've known several members who have had their home burglarized. One individual we knew had a big footprint in his front door because someone simply kicked the door in and they took all their furniture, TV, everything they had in there. You talk about sin, that is a sin against God, it's breaking the commandment against stealing. That's a sin against a person; it's a trespass for sure and it's an offense. One individual said I think I should go out and buy a 12-gauge. His response to being burglarized. Maybe he was the guy that was burglarized more than once. You think about how can I forgive this? A crime has been committed, the person is going to go to prison, you don't have anything to say about that, especially if they've been charged. It can still be a personal thing between you and God.

I'd like to wind up with a remarkable story that relates to everything we've talked about today. About an individual who suffered everything. He suffered a grievous sin, a

grievous trespass and a grievous offense. In fact, that offense—the trauma from that offense—was so great it nearly destroyed him. It might have destroyed most of us but it didn't. I'm going to read most of this with very little comment. Just as a mental exercise, try to imagine what your response would be in this situation. My wife and I were talking just before Passover, maybe just after, trying to imagine the humiliation, the suffering and the pain that Christ went through being crucified.

This is a true story. *The Khmer Rouge* [actually French for red Khmer] led by Pol Pot reached Phnom Penh and took power in 1975. The new regime (I'm reading most of this) modeled itself in malice, communism and immediately evacuated the cities and sent the entire population on forced marches to rural work projects [think re-education and death camps]. They attempted to rebuild the country's agriculture on the model of the 11th century, discarded Western medicine and destroyed temples, libraries and anything considered Western. At least 1 million Cambodians out of a total population of 8 million, died from executions, overwork, starvation and disease. Estimates as to how many people were killed by the Khmer Rouge regime ranged from approximately 1 to 3 million. The most commonly cited figure is about 2 million about 1/4th of the population. This gave rise to the term "killing fields" and a prison called Tuol Sleng became notorious for its history of mass killings. Hundreds of thousands fled across the border in the neighboring Thailand. The regime disproportionately targeted ethnic minority groups; the Cham Muslim suffered serious purges with as much as half their population exterminated. However, most of the victims of the Khmer Rouge regime were not ethnic minorities but ethnic Khmer—professionals such as doctors, lawyers and teachers were also targets. According to reports, eyeglasses were death sentence; they were a sign of intellectualism, so you died for that.

The story picks up in the middle of this maelstrom of atrocities. In 1977 at the age of 14, Sokreaksa "Reaksa" Himm, saw thirteen members of his family murdered by Khmer Rouge soldiers in the killing fields of Cambodia. Miraculously surviving the massacre, Soreksa swore revenge against the men responsible for the loss of his family.

After years of surviving the killing fields, I along with my father and brothers were dragged to the edge of a mass grave, slashed with machetes, clubbed with poles and left for dead. Minutes later I awoke in the grave in a pile of my dead and dying relatives. I was able to climb out and hide in nearby weeds when the killers left to round up my female relatives to complete their macabre mission. When they returned, they murdered my mother and sister, all the soldiers threw dirt on the people that were my entire life. I swore revenge. I was alone, hungry and scared and in the coming weeks I made my way across the jungle avoiding soldiers by day and sleeping in trees by night to escape roaming tigers. I eventually found my way to Thailand in the "safety" of succession in refugee camps [and I think he spent two or three years in refugee camps], all the while planning and plotting the deaths of the men who murdered my loved ones. He had a seething hatred he lived with. [He went to sleep with that and he woke up with that every day.] He said, I later immigrated to Canada. I started a new life in the West but could not release myself from the presence of hatred, anger and vengeance. [He had an emotional lock on those things; he couldn't get rid of them.] I discovered that

forgiveness truly is mystifying and as the years passed my blood oath and the all-consuming lust for vengeance were in direct conflict with the anger against the killers which is greater than the grief for my family and it burned inside me like a great ball of fire. For years I cultivated elaborate fantasies in which I tortured and murdered the killers again and again, projecting all my rage and pain I had bottled up inside myself and my plans for what I would do to the men when I found them. I realized that I would never know true peace until I dealt with this as well. I had to find a way of forgiving them before the bitterness inside destroyed me. [This is a real-life story.] Eventually I came to a great moment of truth when I came to know Jesus Christ as my personal Savior through years of Bible study and communion with God. [That's what he understood. If you've been deeply hurt it isn't easy to forgive but we can learn a lesson from Jesus who forgave those who crucified them. Then he goes on to say he began to meditate on the Bible and he said,] I found in the book of Psalms a wonderful source of support and comfort. Here was someone like me—David—who had known despair and was not afraid to cry out to God in pain and anguish. Across the centuries I heard the voice of a man who wept and cried to his God and yet who always reaffirmed the reality of God's ability to keep him safe. Forgiveness doesn't come through vengeance and neither does forgetting. No amount of violence could erase my memory so I gave up my urge to inflict pain on those who had hurt me and killed my family. I knew it wouldn't help and nursing those desires was only damaging me. My emotional, spiritual, physical and psychological being (it was killing him). In time I discovered that forgiveness opens a channel for real spiritual power to work in my life; a power which brings healing and wholeness.

Years later he was converted to Christianity and then he went to seek the people that had done these things to him. He says: *In the years that followed I began a new mission, one that still included finding the men responsible for the deaths of my loved ones but for a new purpose. I no longer wanted to seek their deaths but to tell them of the life and hope that I found. I eventually found two of the men involved in my family's death in the very village and among the very people they terrorized over two decades before. Initially on hearing I wanted to meet the men to forgive them, many people thought my plan was just another attempt to locate these guys so I could take revenge. That would be the natural response. To the surprise of the men of most of the villages, I shook hands with these two men and forgave them.*

It took him years to do that. Reaksa has authored three books. One of the books is [The Tears of My Soul](#) and it's about his experiences and much more elaborate than the short piece I just read. After [The Heavy Rain](#), more recently he wrote another book [The Shepherd of My Soul](#). So, what did he go on to do with his life? He is currently a missionary in Cambodia. He builds schools, plans churches, trains leaders and I know people will say and unfortunately very typically, but he's not part of us—he's not part of the church. We used to make sport out of that, ridiculing other people's brand of Christianity but let's go to Mark 12 and see something. Christ looked at that in an entirely different way.

Mark 12:32 *So the scribe said to Him, "Well said, Teacher. [breaking in on the conversation] You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He.*

33) And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

34) Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." But after that no one dared question Him. (NKJV)

In Mark 9:38, I like the way the New Living puts this.

Mark 9:38 *John said to Jesus, "Teacher, we saw someone using your name to cast out demons, but we told him to stop because he wasn't in our group." (NLT)*

Sound familiar?

39) "Don't stop him!" Jesus said. "No one who performs a miracle in my name will soon be able to speak evil of me.

40) Anyone who is not against us is for us. (NLT)

Christ is telling them to leave them alone.

41) If anyone gives you even a cup of water because you belong to the Messiah, I tell you the truth, that person will surely be rewarded. (NLT)

The point is with that story. This Cambodian man, through this unimaginable experience learned the incredible value of the lesson of forgiveness from what he understands of Christianity. We can't slight that. A lot of people take comfort and strength from God's Word. It's God's Word, it's not our word, it doesn't belong to us. You have to ask yourself, could we with that same horrific experience that he went through, how would react? Would we forgive and let it go? We have to ask ourselves, like my wife and I have been doing lately, who knows if God allows wrongs to come into our lives—sins, trespasses, offenses—to test whether we will find forgiveness and let it go. He's testing that. Relieve the pressure of that offense or whether we will let it eat away at us like a spiritual cancer. We've seen people do that. We've seen people leave the church of God, walk out the door in a huff and never come back.

Even on a personal level, not forgiving has serious spiritual consequences. As someone mentioned, as we're coming to the end of these days of Unleavened Bread in 2022, let's remember these important lessons about sins, trespasses and offenses and if we live long enough, they're going to happen to us. They've probably happened already. The most important thing is that powerful lesson of forgiveness that we can apply to that and what our response should be in that situation. Very last words of Christ, Matthew 18:35.

Matthew 18:35 *"So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses." (NKJV)*