

# Our Place at His Place

## *Friendly Fire*

September 20, 2020

*Welcome to where we're learning to love to the fullest extent!*



Ever heard of **friendly fire**? It sounds nice; but, it's horrific. It's when someone accidentally fires on their own side. One small misguided soldier can wipe out an entire battalion. **Death by friendly fire is more devastating, to both parties, than dying in action against an enemy.**



Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. **[Quite fitting with the fires raging]** The tongue *also* is a fire, a *world of evil* ... It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, **and is itself set on fire by hell.** **[How?]** – James 3:5-6 NIV



**[Well]** An *evil* man brings *evil* things out of the *evil* stored up in his heart. For **the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.** – Luke 6:45 NIV



**[And]** Our struggle is *not* against flesh and blood, but against ... the powers of this dark world and against the *spiritual* forces of *evil* – Ephesians 6:12 NIV



And with all that in mind: **Is your tongue setting friendly hell-fires from your heart?** Sounds nice; but it's horrible. So, with all the smoke, let's clear the air with this question: **Are you loving others as Jesus loves you?**

Of course not. It's a rhetorical question. But, **are you even trying?** Where's it at on your list of priorities? Is it even on your radar? **Are you attempting to fulfill your end of the bargain?** Jesus laid it out there at the Last Supper. You know that law of *Moses*? *This* is the law of *Jesus*!

*My command* is this: Love *each other* as I have loved *you*. – John 15:12 NIV

And how's *that*? Well ...

Christ *died* for the *ungodly*. For one will *scarcely* die for a *righteous* person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows *His* love for *us* in that *while* we were *still* sinners, Christ died for us. **[Why?]** – Romans 5:6-8 ESV

Because *He* is kind to the *ungrateful* and *wicked*. – Luke 6:35b NIV

**[So]** Love your *enemies* **[the ungratefuls and wicked]** ... If you love *those* who love *you*, what reward will *you* get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? **[Matthew's like: "It's true. We do. We totally love people who love us."]** – Matthew 5:44-46 NIV

Pops used to say “you’re the boss’ kid. That means you have to work *twice* as hard as everyone else, so they’ll think you’re working *half* as hard as everyone else.” Well family, I hate to break it to you, but you’re the Boss’ kids. So let’s **grow up, assume the honor, and act like it!**



For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. ... For it is *commendable* if someone bears up under the pain of *unjust* suffering *because* they are conscious of God. ... But if you *suffer* for doing good *and* you *endure* it, this is *commendable* before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps. ... When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted himself to Him who judges justly. – 1 Peter 2:15-23 NIV

And to this you were called, because **if you hold a grudge you doubt the Judge**. And our struggle to be grudgeless is actually **a battle with unbelief at the gates of hell in our heart**. And our victory only comes when we, like Jesus, wholly entrust *ourselves* to Him who judges justly.

For it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I *will* repay,” says the Lord. – Romans 12:19 NIV

**[In fact]** If *your* enemy is hungry, *feed* him; if he is thirsty, give him something to *drink*. In doing *this*, you will heap burning coals on his head. – Romans 12:20 NIV



Now we’re *getting* somewhere! David prayed:

Deliver me, O Lord, from evil men ... Let the heads of those who surround me be covered with the trouble *their* lips have caused. **Let burning coals [from the hellfire in their own heart] fall upon them;** – Psalm 140:1, 9-10 NIV



**We don’t hold a grudge; the grudge holds us.** And *robs* us of the joy that comes from the peace that comes from being forgiven to the full extent, and then offering the same in His name.



It’s like saving raccoons from a forest fire. Saving *people* from a fire is great. They appreciate it and everything. But raccoons? They’re the worst. You know, like *us* when it comes to salvation. **You don’t expect any cooperation during the effort, let alone appreciation after. Your motive is salvation, and rescue your reward.** Though you *know* going in, that it’s gonna bite and claw and treat you terribly unfairly, you won’t retaliate; **you’ll simply continue to try to gently convince ‘em of your love.** So you can save them.

**And, even if you fail, the attempt is worth it.** Either way, you gladly display any wounds of honor you receive in the process. Like Jesus did. Even as He was hanging from His hands, while suffering at the hands of His enemies ...

Jesus said, “Father, forgive them ...” - Luke 23:34 NIV

Now *that's* forgiveness to the *fullest* extent! That's how *Dad* did it. Like a *Boss*! Three years earlier, on the day He chose His twelve "little children", (Jn 13:33) He first commanded them, saying:

To you who are *listening* I say: Love your enemies, **[here's how:] do good to those who hate you, [because, "He did not retaliate" (1 Pet 2:23)] bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.** [someone texted in during the Q&A and said they pray a blessing on the one who makes them feel unforgiveness when they see them or think of them. Now *that's* like a Boss!] If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. [This isn't about enabling abuse; it's about letting *them* do the wrongdoing without *sharing* in their sin and sinking to their level. If you don't even like 'em, why partner with 'em against the Captain of your salvation?!] **If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them.** ... [Why let some old clothes come between you and your Commander? Be the first (and maybe *only*) to do the right thing. Instead of withholding your love and forgiveness until they treat you with the respect you think you deserve, try this] Do to others as you would have them do to you. [In fact, do *twice* as much, and expect *half* the credit – if *any*] ... **and you will be children of the Most High**, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. – Luke 6:27-36 NIV

Now, **it's impossible to love your enemy for no reason.** And yet, to remain *unforgiving* is to not fully take seriously or solemnly the enormity of *our* sin, *His* sacrifice, and our sincere appreciation. And the two greatest barriers to peace and joy are guilt and resentment. **Guilt comes from what we do to others.** And, the only true fix is to **sincerely confess our sin and receive forgiveness.** Whereas, **resentment comes from what others do to us.** And, the only true fix is to **sincerely profess our pain and offer forgiveness.**

So, the very best way we can ever pray for true peace and joy in our life, is to sincerely say, "Forgive us *our* debts ... as we forgive our debtors". (Mt 6:12) And yet, it's one thing to **love the unlovable**, and another thing entirely to **forgive the unforgivable.** *That* trips us up. And *that* came up in the Q&A last Sunday after service. Great questions regarding what forgiving is and isn't; and how to do it when you're doing what you can and you still can't - especially if someone is using *your* faith to pressure you to "forgive" *them* according to their definition of what *your* forgiveness should look like. That came up. So let's talk about what forgiveness *isn't*.

Get your pencils ready! And cue up those coals.

- 1) First, let's get in our head that **forgiveness isn't a feeling; it's a choice.** And if you practice long enough, choosing to forgive when you don't want to, it might *become* a feeling. But that's *frosting*. It's a choice – a choice we're really, really, glad *Jesus* made regarding *us*.
- 2) **Forgiving isn't forgetting.** God has that ability; we don't! Just the opposite; **we grow by learning to live with painful memories.** That's how it works down here.
- 3) **Forgiving isn't dismissing**, or downplaying the offense by passing it off as no big deal. Just the opposite. **We face the full truth of what happened**, and we choose to forgive, not to *minimize* the effects of someone's sin, but to *neutralize* 'em.
- 4) **Forgiving isn't condoning**, by justifying or rationalizing the offender's behavior.

- 5) **Forgiving isn't resolving**, unless there's sincere repentance on behalf of the offender; otherwise, restoration isn't gonna happen ... at least, not yet.
- 6) **Forgiving isn't legally pardoning**, by releasing the offender from any appropriate consequences for their inappropriate actions.
- 7) And **forgiving certainly isn't trusting**. Trust must be earned; *if it's even possible*.

Many people put *their* trust in [Jesus] when they saw the powerful works He did. But Jesus did not trust them because He knew all men. He did not need anyone to tell Him about man. He knew what was in man. **[And yet, He died for man!]** – John 2:23a-25 NLV



So, what *is* forgiveness? I mean, what's *left*? Not much! Just the **truest worship**, our **strongest witness**, and the **purest confirmation** of the sincerity of my gratefulness to God! Because, **forgiving is surrendering any desire to get even**. Because, **forgiving is deferring all judgment to Jesus**. Because, **forgiving is placing our pain in His hands**. Because, **forgiving is trusting the justness of God**. But that is often a process, and so **forgiving is both freeing and ongoing**.

Ever *try* to forgive someone? Thought you had. Then encounter 'em and get hit with a wind-whipped wall of hellfire straight from your heart? So, what are we supposed to do when our forgiveness *doesn't take? Won't stick?* Well, you know how **we rehearse a grudge over and over**? Turns out *that's* how we **release a grudge, over and over**. First, we forgive 'em for the wrong; but, *then* **we got'a re-forgive 'em for the pain that returns**.

Jesus' parable of the wicked servant reminds us how we tend to forget to contrast the big debts owed to us by others with the ginormous debt of gratitude we owe *Jesus!*

When you were dead in your transgressions ... He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, – Colossians 2:13 NAS

So how do we forgive unforgivable, intentional, inexcusable, violations? **Turn 'em into worship** and see it as the most potent proof we can offer of your genuine gratitude. **Does He deserve that level of worship from your heart?** Just, whatever you do, **don't see it as your generosity toward jerks**. Choose to **see it as your gratefulness toward Jesus**. And until I feel the difficulties involved in trying to forgive those who sin against me, I'll fall woefully short in my ability to appreciate the forgiveness I've received from Him for my sin.

Jesus wants the world to know *Him* by knowing *us*; and, to know *us* by an *indisputable greater love*. That's *why* we're called to love *and* forgive our *enemies*. Otherwise we're offering love only to the "low hanging fruit", to the least and easiest extent.

However you want to look at it, the forgiveness *we* offer is a direct expression of reverence, appreciation, loyalty. Question is, **are you grateful enough to Him to forgive them?** To the fullest extent. And hold up our end of the bargain.