



SERIES: July Series “OFF ROADING”

SPEAKER: NAT CRAWFORD

Thursday, July 8, 2021

Scripture: Ps 86:5-7 / Colossians 3:13/ Phil. 3:13b-14

TITLE: The Freedom in Forgiveness

I remember a few years ago when I was teaching a course on personal values. One of the values was faith. A cornerstone of faith is forgiveness. After this session, an upset woman approached me. “I will never forgive this person who hurt me. I can never do it. That will be their punishment.” “Oh. I’m just curious. Are you a Christian?” “Why yes! This is my church.” “A nice one at that. But what do you do with Jesus’ words in Matthew 6? Jesus said, ‘If you do not forgive others, God won’t forgive yours’.” She made a “Hmph” sound and walked off.

I feel bad for that woman who thought withholding forgiveness was the right power move. But it was disobedient to God and harmful to her life. She forgot, or didn’t know, that there is freedom in forgiveness. But this freedom only happens when we practice three kinds of forgiveness.

Forgiveness received. King David knew mistakes. He knew disappointing others and God. But he knew, with confidence, forgiveness was at his disposal. All he had to do was ask and receive it. King David wrote, “For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you. ⁶ Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer; listen to my plea for grace. ⁷ In the day of my trouble, I call upon you, for you answer me.” (Ps 86:5-7, ESV) God doesn’t deal out forgiveness begrudgingly. God offers it freely for His children. But we need to ask with a repentant heart, and then receive it with gratitude.

Forgiveness given. Paul wrote in Colossians 3:13, “bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.” Forgiveness is hard, but it is possible. We, as forgiven people, have the duty and privilege of extending God’s mercy and grace to others. This forgiveness, however, does not make us a doormat, or permit others to hurt us. But what it does is allows us to forgive continually (Matthew 18:21-22) while trusting God. God is the ultimate judge who will make all things right. Our forgiveness is evidence we trust God’s sovereignty and goodness.

Forgiveness practiced. Two people could have been trapped by their pasts: Peter and Paul. Peter denied Jesus three times. But Jesus forgave Peter and commissioned him (and others) to build the church. Peter could have taken himself out and said, “No way.” Instead, he practiced forgiveness and forgave himself.

Paul was a persecutor of the church. He hated Jesus and His followers. People died through the authority of Paul. Paul wrote, “But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God

in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13b-14). He could have been chained to his past sins. Instead, he practiced forgiveness and forgave himself.

So here is my challenge for you today. Begin to receive, give, and practice forgiveness. There is freedom in forgiveness. We don’t need to live in bondage to guilt. We don’t need to be chained down by the hurt from others. We don’t need to live in our past. We are forgiven. Therefore we are free. So begin to receive, give, and practice forgiveness. When we do this, we will win the day.