

The Choice is Yours – The Parable Series

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Searching for Something Bigger

Do you ever find yourself searching for something bigger than you? For a community to be a part of? A place founded on truth and love. A place to worship the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Son of God. Welcome to Founded in Truth, where we're more than just a fellowship. We're a family. So welcome home.

As you know, we've been studying or reviewing the words and the sayings and the stories and the examples, the parables of Yeshua, our Master. And I hope it's been about two months—I hope these last two months have been edifying and you've been able to see things maybe that you've never seen before, and that the words of the Master perhaps have edified you or maybe even pierced your heart in certain areas. I know it has for me, and it's amazing how we can go back and learn these parables at such a young age in Sunday school and revisit them as adults and see the weight that Yeshua had put behind his sayings.

And so this may be the last week that we are visiting intentionally the parables, and we're going to be reading out of Matthew chapter 18, which is just a powerful chapter, a powerful chapter. And has this series been at least edifying for some of you? Maybe.

Matthew 18: Humility and the Kingdom

Turn with me to Matthew chapter 18. I was going to take chunks and pieces, but we're going to basically read the whole thing almost. Matthew chapter 18, starting in verse 1. We have the situation where the disciples are following this rabbi and they're learning all these incredible

things and this new way of life. Yeshua proclaiming this new creation being birthed into the here and the now. God's kingdom is being birthed here and now. The disciples are going back and forth with each other. If you can picture them: I bet I'm greater than you in the kingdom. No, I'm going to be greater in the kingdom. No, no, no, no.

And this sets the stage. I want you guys to imagine. We have a lot of children here, don't we? Such a blessing. Sometimes it's chaotic, but I love it because we get to experience the new generation, the next generation that God is raising up right before our eyes. And so the children running around, mine included, just picture one of them holding an airplane or playing with a toy or scooting around in a little cart, and Yeshua calling one of them. He puts him in the midst of them. And said, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. That escalated quickly.

And it's amazing because there are so many different teachings about children, but the thing about children is they are the most powerless members of society, especially in the first century. See, your social status, at least in the first century and even today, increases with age and experience. Children don't have a huge social status. They don't have a huge agenda. They don't have a ton of influence over everybody else.

Receiving Like a Child

And of course, in the first century, the way that Romans viewed their children was a lot different than the way that the Judeans did. So the Judeans of the first century—Josephus writes that for the Jewish people in the first century, the emphasis on children being a blessing of God was undeniable. And that was something to be proud of. Whether you had children or not, that your community had children, this was the next generation and God was blessing your community.

But apart from the love that we give them, children have no power in society, nor really any privileges. They have no status apart from the love. And if we want to be great, Yeshua says we must become like them. Giving up our own status, giving up our own agendas, and depending only on the love that God gives us, and reciprocating that love that we receive from the Father. And it seems like such a simple thing, oh okay, but very, very difficult thing to choose to do.

And look what the Master says, our Rabbi. He says that whoever receives one such child in his name receives him, but whoever causes one of these little ones to stumble, to make them sin, it would be better, better, better to have a great millstone. Millstones are either crushed olives or grain. And a great millstone wouldn't be one that you would roll around by hand. It would be the one that the donkey would be hooked to, to go round and round. In other words, not a little

millstone, but a big one. And it would either have a hole in it and you'd stick your head through, or he's saying a rope, or whatever. It would be attached to your neck, and it would be better that you would be thrown into the ocean and drowned.

The Weight of Influencing Believers

Now the context, of course, here is literally children. So Yeshua is having a parable moment here without anything saying it's a parable. He has a child. You must become like the child. And of course it speaks of literal children, but I believe that the words of Yeshua extend further than that. And if I were to say that child was parable, metaphorical, then what do you think Yeshua was actually talking about if not a toddler? Maybe newer believers? Would that be a stretch? Maybe those who are not quite as mature as some others. Maybe those who are relying on God's love to save them solely because that's all they know and not through their own agendas.

And Yeshua says, if you cause these people—these vulnerable believers who may not know the depths of Scripture, who may not know all of the aspects of sin and holiness, who may not know the Torah, who may not know the fullness of who Yeshua is—if you cause them to stumble, if you cause them to walk away from God versus closer to God, it would be better to drown by having a millstone tied around your neck.

And it's like talking to someone who's eager to grow closer to God and advising them to do something that causes them to be further away from God. It's like having someone who is yearning to experience the depth of God's love in their life and you, through your actions in the name of God, causing them to mimic you instead of God. It's like someone who yearns to feel the mercy of God in their life and you, through your words, representing God's mercy and God's character as something it's not. It would be better for you to be drowned. Can we get graphic? It would be better, Yeshua is saying, for your bloodstreams to be supersaturated with water to the point where your cells begin to burst and your organs shut down slowly. That would be a better option.

Men and women, heads of your homes, your children, his children, are looking up to you to represent who he is. I've only been a parent for a couple years now, but I've come to realize that when I parent, I need to parent intentionally.

The Depths of the Lake

I was reading an interesting article recently, and I always know something will be great when my wife advises me not to talk about it. It was about Lake Tahoe. I've never been to Lake Tahoe,

but apparently it's pretty. And it's also very deep. It's about 1,600 feet deep, roughly.

And the article was speaking about drowning hazards, because it was researched, and how many people who drown in Lake Tahoe are never found. The reason is the temperature in the lake is so cold that the bacteria that causes decomposition doesn't exist. And so literally there is an unknown number of people who have drowned at the bottom of the lake yet to be found. It would be better for you to be one of them. The words of our Master.

Give Up Your Status

If we become a child, we understand how to engage children. We give up status, our own pride, our own agendas. We give up our own desires and pursuits. And all we have left is God's love and mercy. And all we should know is what the arms of the Father feel like. Right? Yeah, be a kid, just like Yeshua said.

And now let's get into something more serious. And we'll skip ahead just a little bit to verse 15. Verse 15, if you're following along, Yeshua is giving instructions to this community that's forming around him. And if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone, and if he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen to even the church in this translation, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, I will be there with them.

Seventy Times Seven

And at this point, Peter comes up and says to him, Lord, how often will my brother sin against me and I forgive him? As many as seven times? And Yeshua said to him, I do not say to you seven times, but 77 times. Therefore, the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.

So you guys need a break? We're about to jump into an actual parable where Yeshua starts chapter 18 off with a nonverbal parable. It's a child, and now he's going to go into an actual parable. So you ready? Good. I'm glad you guys are ready.

The Unforgiving Servant

Verse 23, Therefore a kingdom of heaven, the one thing that Yeshua proclaimed and his mission orbited around, may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. And when he began to settle, one was brought to him that owed him 10,000 talents. Some of your Bibles may be a thousand bags of gold. Some may say various things. What the author here is intending to portray is essentially like a year's worth of wages, a zillion dollars. He owes him a bajillion dollars. And since he could not pay his master, the master ordered him to be sold and his wife and children and all that he had and payment to be made. So we're going to take your whole family and force them into servitude to pay me back the debt.

And the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything. And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him his debt. But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, a thousand bucks. And seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, Pay what you owe me. So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything. And he refused, and he went, and he put him in prison until he should pay the debt.

When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, You wicked servant, I forgave you all the debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you? And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, or some of your translations may say tormentors, until he should pay all of his debt.

So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you if you do not forgive your brother from your heart. Is it obvious what we will be discussing today? That one word starts with an F that no one likes to talk about, forgiveness. Forgiveness. The words of Yeshua about forgiveness.

Why Forgiveness Matters

And forgiveness is one of those things that we often struggle with without realizing it. I've seen, witnessed, and heard about many counseling sessions where the root of such things as abuse, addiction, sexual identity issues, laziness, gluttony, fear, physical ailments, and a huge scope of other issues were based on unforgiveness, whether it be something father or mother did as a child or something later in life, someone you trusted, unforgiveness is rampant.

And we don't like to talk about it because sometimes we feel like we have a right to hold on to things and we have a right to retaliation. We have a right to wish ill will on others. And in the world, that's true. You have a right. But Yeshua is talking about a new world, a new creation, a new kingdom where you forego that right. And it's something that we struggle with constantly.

And forgiveness is kind of a big deal with Yeshua. It's essentially the fuel, the pulse of the gospel message when Yeshua opens his mouth. And it's a topic that no one wants to hear because it reminds us that we are charged with actually doing something as a response to what Yeshua has already done. Yeshua actually includes forgiveness as a big part of the Lord's Prayer. This is how you should pray. Every day, this is how you should pray. It's kind of a big deal.

The Lord's Prayer and Forgiveness

And we know the Lord's Prayer. Can we kind of say it together? In different translations, I'll lead.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debt as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. And if you have a King James, for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever.

It's a big deal, forgiveness. And that is really emphasized with the verse right after the Lord's Prayer. Does anyone know that? The two verses that come right after the Lord's Prayer? Yeah, we don't like these. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But... It's a scary word. But if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive yours.

Yeshua makes forgiveness this foundational piece of what it means to be a follower of his kingdom message. And he seems to expect us to understand the weight of what it means not to forgive. It's like he wants us to do what he did. That's incredible. That's a brand new thought right there. It's like he wanted us to mimic him when we went out in the world, to be his ambassadors, to reciprocate forgiveness as we receive it from God onto others.

As we see in [Matthew 6](#) and in the parable about the servant going to jail, unforgiveness is not something you can sustain while being a follower of the Christ, of the Messiah, of the King. It simply is not a sustainable lifestyle. And it's like Yeshua is warning us in this chapter. And as we grow as a community of believers, as we grow as Christ followers, as Yeshua Torah followers, we tend to hurt each other as a result of growing pains as we learn how to become these kingdom people.

And Yeshua gives the heads up in this chapter. When this happens, here are some tools that you can use to deal with offense, anger, fear, anxiety, sin, wrongs—tools that will hopefully lead to repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation for at least one party, but ideally both.

Seven Times, Seventy-Seven Times

And so here's Peter asking a question. And look what Peter says. Seven times. Is that enough to forgive someone, Master? And we have Jewish rabbinic writings that speak about and explain how private rebuke was something that took place in the Essene community and even the rabbinic circles in the first century. And we also have a document where some rabbis are discussing how many times do you forgive someone? And they come to the conclusion that three. You should only forgive someone three times for an offense.

And so Peter comes up and asks, Master, how many times should I forgive my brother? Seven times? That's pretty generous, right? And then Yeshua... 77 times. 77 times.

And any Jewish reader would understand what Yeshua was saying right then and there. They would have understood what Yeshua was quoting. They would have had to ponder why he's quoting that scripture. Yeshua has taken us back to Genesis when he says 77 times. And there's a story in [Genesis 4](#), and it's about two brothers, one older, of course, and the older brother is jealous of his younger brother. And he's having trouble making good choices and dealing with these emotions.

And God speaks to him, and he says, listen, you need to take control of this. And if you don't take wisdom and patience and take control of your flesh, sin is crouching at the door to overtake you. You need to master it. And this is the story of Cain and Abel. And right after this conversation, Cain goes into the field and murders his brother. Cain moves on. He ends up building some cities. The cities, from what we can tell, the reputation is of Cain being the builder. Like Cain, like cities. And for about five or six generations, [Genesis 4](#) kind of leads us into this, until we arrive at a descendant of Cain, a poet known as Lamech.

I don't know how you know he's a poet, because he wrote a poem in [Genesis 4](#). And would you like to see the poem? Good, I'm glad. He writes this poem to his two wives—a poem about being a warrior, being a manly man, testosterone-filled macho. And he says to them: Adah and Zillah, hear my voice, you wives of Lamech. Listen to what I say. I've killed a man for wounding me. All the men go, hurr, hurr.

How many of your Bibles in [Matthew 18](#) say 7 times 70? It's a couple. How many of yours say 77? A lot of newer translations will connect 77. So in the Greek in the New Testament, it could

be translated both ways. It's kosher to translate it both ways. However, there's one other time where that phrase in the New Testament, [Matthew 18](#), the Greek shows up in the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament. And that is in this episode with Lamech, 77 times.

Yeshua is referring back to this. And Lamech's saying, I didn't just give seven times the vengeance to this young guy who came up and wounded me, this young fool. I gave 77 times the vengeance. I am Lamech, hear me roar. And Yeshua is alluding to this for a reason. Because revenge and violence are in our nature. It's how we respond to offense and wrongdoing.

If someone tries to throw a punch at you, it's natural to flinch, put your guard up. If someone hurts you or mocks you, breaks your trust laws to you, it's very, very, very natural to respond out of anger and vengeance. They deserve this. And this is what Yeshua is showing us. This is what he's showing Peter. And Peter's jiving along with Yeshua's message.

We're supposed to be born again, and we're supposed to be these children. Okay, we can do this. And we're supposed to forgive others and live out this new creation of God's image bearers. And we're supposed to live out this new way of being human as an example of following Yeshua. And then he goes to Yeshua asking this question. Okay, I got it, I got it, I got it. But what's the limit? At what point do I go back to how I was before? At what point do I respond to how I was before? At what point do we stop acting like new creations and go back? At what point, Yeshua? Seven times? That's pretty generous.

No. No, not seven times. No. You're supposed to have the same passion as Lamech, but not for unrestrained revenge.

In this chapter, Yeshua is addressing the problems and questions we have about forgiveness. What is forgiveness? What is not forgiveness? That's important, by the way. What happens if someone offended me and they died, and now I can't ask them to forgive me? What happens if I waited 20 years and I still harbor this anger and resentment, but it's kind of awkward to go to them and say something because they have no idea? What happens then? It would be awkward. What happens if they ask for forgiveness, but I don't think they really meant it? What happens then? Yeshua is addressing all of us in this chapter.

And Yeshua wants to show through forgiveness a new type of kingdom that exists in this world. Our actions should be a symbol of that kingdom. Something I learned from a mentor of mine is to understand what forgiveness isn't, because it's very, very confusing a lot of times. There are many believers, pastors, and teachers who will take this conversation with Peter and essentially say that you just got to forgive him and forget it. Someone hurts you, live for Jesus and just let it go. If they continue hurting you, well, live for Jesus and just let it go and let them continue.

This may work for some scenarios, like someone making fun of your hair or something, I don't know.

What Forgiveness Is Not

But where forgiveness truly has the most impact is in situations where people are abused, people are facing horrors of life, and people are facing defenders with a big O. I'm going to try to make the case that by simply reading Yeshua's words, Yeshua is not saying that you need to lie down and become a doormat to someone who is constantly seeking to hurt you.

Forgiveness is not forgetting. Forgiveness is not excusing someone's actions towards you. Forgiveness is not condoning, nor is it toleration of someone's actions or wrongdoings towards you. Forgiveness is not reconciliation. That's something completely different. That's a goal, but it's something outside of forgiveness—something that comes after forgiveness. Forgiveness does not mean that you put yourself back into a situation, a place, or an environment where abuse, offense, and sin take place.

Forgiveness does not mean justice is not needed. It does not mean the offender will always escape the consequences of their actions. There are times you can excuse the consequences of someone's wrongdoing against you, but that takes wisdom and discernment. For example, if sexual abuse happens, relieving them of justice and consequences for their actions only allows them to have a greater scope of victims in the world. You see how that works? So these things are not synonymous.

How to Respond When Wronged

When someone wrongs you or hurts you, in this chapter, Yeshua gives us clear instructions on what to do and how to respond. Notice I said respond, not react. Everybody knows there's a difference between responding and reacting. See, if you're not careful and if you confuse a response with a reaction, you may find yourself on the same side as the offender, thinking that you're justified in what you did when you're not.

Yeshua said that if someone wrongs you, what do you do? You go to them, right? You say, "Hey, this is wrong. You've wronged me. You need to repent." What happens if they don't listen? You don't have a little prayer meeting. You don't type on Facebook about it. You don't use it as fuel to gossip around the fellowship. You go and you take someone else in the community that knows them—one or two more people—and then you take them with you.

You don't just forget about it and you don't deny it. You go and speak to them and you take these people with you. And then if they don't listen to them, then you bring it before what Scripture calls the church, the community, the fellowship. In other words, you involve more people at that point.

And this escalation is not for the sake of condemning them or pushing them farther away. The motivation here is that love and mercy will abound in their life and that they will be restored as part of the community, because the community is now involved because the community loves them. You see how this works? Their presence matters.

Escalation and Boundaries

And if they don't care and they don't listen, then what do you do? If the support system that you brought to them doesn't have an impact, you treat them as a tax collector and a Gentile. And it's fascinating because sometimes we get so emotional—as we should when someone wrongs us—and we'll go to them and be like, "Hey, you need to repent. This really hurt me." And they're like, "No, no, no, no. I'm justified in what I did and I enjoyed doing it and I wanted to and I intentionally hurt you."

And so you'd bring one or two more people to them and they shrug them off. And then when it says bring it before the fellowship, the agenda is to bring others that know this person and are part of the support system that we call a fellowship.

Now, what that does not mean—bringing it before the fellowship, the community, or the church—doesn't mean making it public. What I mean is, you go to them and they dismiss you. You bring one or two other people, and they dismiss you as well. The next escalation is not typing it on Facebook to everyone who claims to be a believer online, because obviously they're the church, right? No, that's not protocol.

Now, if there's someone who is abusive and a threat, or a false teacher who's a threat to the fellowship, sure, make that public and warn people. But you're not trying to warn people about this person yet. You're trying to reconcile them back within the community, right?

And this passage contains instructions for us. And Yeshua didn't change directions after he said this. And this is why I have a problem with the concept of 77 times being taught as just let it go. Because just a paragraph before, Yeshua gives instructions on how not to just let it go, how to go talk to them, and how to approach this situation. And don't just be a doormat and don't just let them continue their wrongdoing and think that they're allowed to do this. No, you need to address it with the community.

Setting Boundaries with Community Support

Yeshua was not teaching that you should put yourself in harm's way and subject yourself to continual abuse from someone else, whatever form that may take. Yeshua says, go and speak with them. Love can cover someone's hurt.

And it's amazing because if you notice here, Yeshua does not seem to be envisioning that you're ever left alone with this person again if they refuse to repent. You ever notice that? You go to them, say, "Listen, I feel like you're intentionally harming me. You've wronged me. And I want us to be reconciled, but I cannot because I have this issue. You have sinned against me."

And if they do not repent, at no other point in the workflow of our rabbi does he say, "Okay, go continue to be alone with them." No. You take someone else. And if they still do not repent, then you take more. In other words, Yeshua is setting up boundaries—safe boundaries within the community—between you and this person. And the further they go into unrepentance and the attitude they hold, the further you distance yourself from them, with your community's support. You see that?

Forgiveness Without Reconciliation

Forgiveness does not need both parties to participate. Reconciliation does. But that's not totally in your control—reconciliation. That takes two people. Forgiveness is in your control.

And as we read the parable, it's about a king whose servant owes him a year's worth of wages—a zillion dollars—and the man begs for mercy, and the king excuses his debt. And then what happens? He's strolling along, and he sees another servant, and this servant owes him some money, and he chokes him. And the man speaks the very same words that he did to the king: "I'll get you the money. I'm sorry. Have mercy." And this man throws him in jail.

Now, I have a question. You're supposed to read this and kind of chuckle a little bit. Because does he want the man to pay him back? Of course. Can the man pay him back if he's in jail? Yeshua is showing us here how irrational we are when we allow, when we harbor and shelter unforgiveness in our lives.

For the man, his seeking of justice stopped long before this incident. His actions are demonstrating that he's not interested in justice. He's interested in one thing: hurting them. Unforgiveness puts you in a place where you don't want them to apologize or be able to apologize. You want them to be in a place of suffering, to feel the pain that you feel like they deserve to feel.

This is Lamech. We don't just want justice. We want the satisfaction of seeing them suffer. At least a little. Just choke them a little bit, right? And we want to place this offender, this person, in an impossible situation so that they will know the pain that they caused me.

What Forgiveness Really Is

And this parable is not just about a guy getting grace and mercy and then simply forgetting about it. No, forgiveness, as Yeshua describes it, is choosing to release the actions and the things that you could do to someone else, but you choose not to. It's a choice.

That's what Jesus is focusing on in this scenario: when you forgive someone, you're relinquishing your power to cripple them with vengeance and leave them unable to recover.

Many of us could say that we forgive someone in our lives. A product of forgiveness is that you no longer wish ill will on someone. When you think of that person who wronged you—that person you claim to have forgiven—you're no longer wishing ill will on them.

Yeah, I hope they get a car accident. I hope they fall off a cliff. I hope they get sick. They deserve that much at least. It's not forgiveness. Yeshua's proclamation was about God's what? His kingdom here and now. And where is God's kingdom? It's among us. It's within us. It's here. It's now. And God's new creation is being birthed now. And as members and citizens of this kingdom, we do things differently now.

God's Kingdom Does Things Differently

Conflict and responding to hurt look differently. And we give up our ability and our right to retaliate. And how does this parable end?

Then his master summoned him and said to him, "You wicked servant, I forgave you all this debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you? And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers until he would pay all of his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

Forgiveness is not optional. God expects you to understand the depth of what he forgave you, how he sought for you to be restored, not destroyed, not placed in an impossible situation where you could never return to him. No, no, no. He expects you to internalize this to the point that you reciprocate it to others.

And look at the last verse here. Look at the last verse. Where does forgiveness start? It's from your heart. And we read a lot about the heart in scriptures. And we know that our heart beats blood. But metaphorically, the heart and guts were considered the seat of emotion and consciousness in someone's life.

Forgiveness Starts from the Heart

Forgiveness starts in that place where you put your emotions on hold for a moment. And you choose. It's a choice. You choose to forego what the logic of your flesh wants to do, and your choice is supposed to affect your emotions in response. Your choice can control your emotions, and forgiveness is not something we want to do. At least, I don't want to do it all the time. I mean, good gracious. It's not something that comes naturally. It hurts, and we should be able to hold on to this attitude. We should be able to hope for destruction and suffering as a reaction to what they did to us. And that's what Yeshua is trying to tell you—that's not part of the kingdom.

And if you choose to harbor unforgiveness, God will treat you like this wicked servant. And where did he go? He went to jail to be tormented, if you will, until he pays all of his debt back. As we discussed before, you can't pay back your debt in jail. Yeshua is saying that God will react with the same impossible situation you placed on others in your unwillingness to forgive. Not only will your debts not be forgiven, it will be impossible for you to ever even repay them as long as you hold on to unforgiveness.

The Choice to Release

Forgiveness is choosing to release retaliation, hate, anger, and the hope for suffering. The purpose of forgiveness is so that someone else, the one who is the offender, will be reconciled with God, and that they will be made new, and that God will take this opportunity to change them and make them a vessel of light for his kingdom. That's the attitude of a forgiver.

And it doesn't mean reconciliation happens as a result. It doesn't mean that you forget what happened. It does not mean that they won't suffer the consequences of their actions or that justice doesn't need to be served. It means that you are choosing to lay it down so that it no longer wounds you. And it means that you're choosing not to go to jail and endure the suffering of your own hate as a reaction to their actions. It means you choose to live focused on God's mercy, not the vengeance of your own flesh.

And Yeshua says, you can do this. You can do this. You can choose to forgive. You can choose to lay it down. You can choose not to go to jail. And maybe you're in that place right now. I don't know.

Imprisoned by Your Own Unforgiveness

Behind bars, behind the bars of your own retaliation and anger tormented daily. And you've placed yourself in the same place as the offender in your life. And it's fascinating because if you're in this place constantly tormented, constantly reliving the offense only to further wound yourself, the key to the jail cell is right between your feet. And all you have to do is pick it up. All you have to do is lay down the unforgiveness and the hope for retaliation and walk out. But if you choose not to, if you choose to hold on to it, then you will stay in the place where you can't even repay your own debts.

Choosing to Forgive: Gordon Wilson's Story

During the 1980s, there was a nasty conflict between the British and what Irish coalition? It went into the 90s as well. The IRA. Irish Republican Army, right? And on this nice sunny day, November 8th, 1987, it was Remembrance Day. And the IRA had planted bombs in buildings in a square in Enniskillen at the monument for the war dead. It was an honoring of the dead who passed.

And the bombs were meant for soldiers, for British soldiers, but they went off about 11 minutes too early, and bricks were thrown and shrapnel was thrown into the crowds of people, and walls of buildings collapsed on these crowds, and 11 people died that day. Ten of them were civilians, and another man was in a coma for 13 years and passed away as a result.

The IRA lost much respect, much support on this day, and this event revealed the horrors of war and violence in our world. So much so that the IRA apologized. Imagine ISIS apologizing to that extent. It was wow. It was a very big wow moment.

And during this memorial service for the dead, a man stood there beside a wall with his daughter, Marie. She was 20 years old and she was a nurse. And his name was Gordon Wilson. And the bombs went off and the walls came down on top of them. And in a speech, he said:

"We were both thrown forward, rubble and stones and whatever in and around came over us and under us. And I was aware of the pain on my right shoulder. And I shouted to Marie, was she all right? And she said, yes. She found my hand. And she said, is that your hand, Dad? I

remember there was six feet of rubble on top of us. And I said, are you all right? And she said, yes. But she was shouting in between, screaming. Three or four times I asked her, are you all right? When I asked her a fifth time, are you all right, Marie? She said, Daddy, I love you very much."

She died later at the hospital. And in a speech, Gordon Wilson says, "I hold no ill will to these people who did this. I forgive them. And I pray for them daily."

Gideon, would you come up? Yes, forgiveness is a choice. And I'd like to end services with some worship so that we can end services together. And while we're worshipping together, the prayer team will be up there. And I invite you. Gain the support from your community. Thank you.

Hey everybody, I'm Matthew Vander Els, pastor at Founded in Truth Fellowship. And if you enjoyed this message and would like to see more messages like this one, please subscribe to our YouTube channel by clicking [here](#). If you'd like more information about what we do and who we are, or if you'd like to partner with us to make a donation, you can do so with this link right [here](#). Hope you guys have a great week and we'll see you next time. Shalom. For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at Foundedintruth.com. EMAIL: Info@foundedintuth.com. FACEBOOK: facebook.com/foundedintruth. WEBSITE: <https://www.foundedintruth.com>. Google: <https://g.co/kgs/az3iPeM>.

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