



Central Idea: Because God has graciously forgiven our insurmountable debt through Christ, we are both commanded and empowered to release others from their offenses, finding personal spiritual freedom in the process.

INTRODUCTION

- Carrying a grudge is like a heavy backpack that exhausts the soul.
- Jesus outlines the character of a citizen of heaven. Central to this character is a heart that mirrors the Father's mercy.
- [Matthew 6:14-15](#) is a hard saying that contains some of the most sobering words in the New Testament: our horizontal relationship with others directly impacts our vertical relationship with God.

I. RECOGNIZE THE MAGNITUDE OF OUR OWN FORGIVENESS

- **The Vertical Debt:** We must first understand the "debt" we owed to God. [Romans 3:23](#) reminds us that all have sinned, and

Romans 6:23 ESV

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- The Costly Grace: Forgiveness isn't "free" in the sense that it cost nothing; it cost the blood of Christ

Ephesians 1:7 ESV

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,

- The Unforgiving Servant: ([Matthew 18:21-35](#)). We cannot effectively forgive others until we realize we have been forgiven a "ten thousand talent" debt that we could never repay.

II. THE DANGER OF THE BITTER ROOT

- Unforgiveness as Imprisonment: When we refuse to forgive, we aren't hurting the offender as much as we are poisoning our own hearts.
- The Spiritual Blockage: According to [Matthew 6:15](#), a heart closed to others becomes a heart closed to God's grace. It is not that God wants to withhold forgiveness, but that a clenched fist cannot receive a gift.
- The Warning in Hebrews: We are told to see to it that "no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled"

Hebrews 12:15 ESV

See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled;

III. THE ACTIVE CHOICE TO RELEASE

- Forgiveness is Not a Feeling: It is a decision of the will. It is the choice to "cancel the debt" and no longer require the offender to pay you back with their suffering or your revenge.

Luke 23:34 ESV

And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments.

- Replacing Malice with Kindness:

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.

Practical and Actionable Acts of Faith

- To move from theory to transformation, the Christian should:
 1. The Name List: Write down the names of those you are holding a grudge against. Pray for them specifically by name for seven days, asking God to bless them ([Matthew 5:44](#)).
 2. The Debt Cancellation: Mentally or symbolically "shred" the bill you feel they owe you. Decide today that you will no longer bring up the offense to them, to others, or even to yourself in moments of rumination.
 3. Seek Restoration (Where Safe): If possible and safe, initiate a conversation of peace. "As far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all" ([Romans 12:18](#)).
 4. Daily Inventory: Make "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" a standard part of your nightly prayers, ensuring no new roots of bitterness take hold.

Conclusion

- Forgiveness is not an endorsement of the wrong done to us, nor is it a sign of weakness. It is the ultimate sign of strength and trust in God's justice.
- When we release the debtor, we find that the prisoner we have actually set free is ourselves.
- Let us walk in the light of God's grace, keeping short accounts and open hearts, so that our fellowship with the Father remains unhindered and joyful.

