

Forgiven?!

Psalm 32

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July 25, 2010 – Evening Sermon

Our text for this study is in Psalm 32 dealing with forgiveness and I've learned a good lesson over the last couple of weeks. One lesson I've learned is 'never' ask a matter of fact person what they think of you. Think about that. If you know some matter of fact people then try it out. The second lesson is never to pray for patience which you have probably learned. Three, never preach on forgiveness so maybe I'll dive in, in a sense, to where maybe I'm not even bold enough to go.

I'll tell you about a couple of encounters I had with two individuals before we go into this passage of Scripture. I had the opportunity at a small college football game one time to sit next to a guy and it was one of those guys where you know that you know them but you can't remember who they are. I'm thinking, "Man I know this guy." He looked so familiar to me and as I listened to him talk I tried to figure out who he was and where I knew this guy from. He talked plenty for me to be able to figure out who he was but I could never put it quite together. So the first half of the football game went through and this guy began engaging me about what a great high school quarter back he was, how dominant he was in high school, what he could do well as a quarter back, how he could do certain plays better than the one we were watching and arrogance just came out of every pore of his body. I'm thinking how do I know this guy? I know that I know him and at half time somebody told me who he was and I thought "Oh that's who it is!" It was a guy who played major league baseball and is in the Hall of Fame now. He sat for an entire half of football making sure that I and all the others blessed to sit near him knew what a great quarter back he could have been. You could probably put a blank and insert anything at that point. He had been so marked by the incredible success in his life that he had concluded and exuded that he would succeed at anything that anybody would put before him.

I correlate that with another conversation I had sitting at a dinner table and there was a well known coach at that table. This well known coach had been fired publicly. He failed in his job and did not perform the way that those that hired him thought he should perform and he failed at it. You could tell that his life had now been marked by being humbled. It wasn't just a façade of a little embarrassment since some time had gone by since his firing but you could tell his life had been

marked by the humbling that had taken place. By the way he communicated you could tell that he needed his life to be marked by that.

As I think about those two scenarios and those two conversations it causes me to wonder what I would say my life is marked by. What would I say has marked my life to the extent that you wouldn't have to sit with me long before you would realize what it is that has marked my life? What is it that your life has been marked by? What has had such an impact on your life that you wouldn't have to be around you long to say 'wow look at what has impacted this particular person's life'? We are going to use Psalm 32 in a sense as the foundation of our time together in the Word for this study. I think it will give us some insight into what has marked all of our lives and what ought to be obvious if anyone was to spend any time with us this would be what would come out of our conversations. Psalm 32 says

1 Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. 3 For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. 4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah 5 I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah 6 Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him. 7 You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah 8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. 9 Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you. 10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD. 11 Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

What is the thing in your life that so marks you that if someone was to spend any amount of time around you they would conclude "wow that person was marked by this"? I think for a Christian it is that we're forgiven. We have been forgiven of all of our sins and that is one thing that so marks us that I think it should be evident to anybody that would be around us. As a matter of fact I think the thing that identifies us often times is related to how we view ourselves. So I will ask it this way. Instead of what has marked you, when you woke up this morning what was the prevalent thought in your mind? We say when we come together in worship we almost without exception communicate somewhere during that service that we're unworthy. We're unworthy to come before God. We'll say that and declare but is that truly the way that we see ourselves? Do we truly see ourselves as unworthy to come before a holy God, unworthy to present ourselves

before Him as those people who in a sense are in need of forgiveness, to be forgiven of all your rebellion against God? That's exactly what it is. It is to be forgiven of all our rebellion. We are enemies of God and to be forgiven of that is an incredible thing that would take place in our life. It is the most incredible thing that would take place. It is something that should mark us and our lives should never be the same once that has taken place.

Are we living a life marked by being forgiven? Are we living a forgiven life? Is that what people would look at us and say "wow that person is forgiven"? How would they see that? What would that look like? Think about this for a minute. You have seen athletes who go on TV and ask for forgiveness where they have done something and then asked for forgiveness. They might not be asking you particularly for forgiveness but you have seen them ask for forgiveness. What did you expect out of them as you watched them after that? You have heard politicians communicate their need for forgiveness for something they have done and what did you expect out of their behavior after that? Are you going to be okay if they stay the same after that but there was this one moment in time where they asked for forgiveness? You have encountered friends that have fallen into a sin and at some point in their lives they have said, "I need to be forgiven of that sin" yet it may or may not be against you but they have sought forgiveness and then as you watched their life after that were you expecting to see anything different? Were you expecting that there would be a change in, not their specific behavior as it relates to a particular sin, but you were expecting to see a general change?

This was so evident recently as someone who has been in the news for all the wrong reasons (Tiger Woods) and he communicates his need of forgiveness and he is sorry for actions he has done. It was so interesting to me that all of sudden somebody in the crowd asked him a question saying, "Tiger, you're asking your wife to forgive you and that you have a heart of forgiveness toward her, so are we going to see your behavior different on the golf course?" Now to my knowledge that report who asked that is not a Christian but that's just a very obvious thing for someone to suggest. If you really do have this heart of forgiveness in any one particular area can't we conclude then that you will behave differently in every other sphere and every other arena that you're going to participate in? Isn't that a fair conclusion for us to draw? Sure it is.

I had the opportunity one time where a guy who was coming to speak to a particular group of people and I and some others were able to take him out to dinner. This particular man who had been involved in drinking heavily where he was severely intoxicated one evening and he drove head first into another car and killed two people. He had gone through a process and part of what he had gone through was to seek the forgiveness from the family of the two people that he killed. I think it was a brother and sister he had killed. So he went to seek the family's forgiveness and now as a part of his community service he was going and speaking to other people younger than him about the dangers of drinking

and driving. I had certain expectations. I had some expectations of a guy that would have some brokenness and compassionate toward other people and that he would have some sort of self control in a sense. When we got there it was like I was eating dinner with a movie star. I concluded somewhere in the middle of the dinner that I think this guy is almost proud of the fact that he has this platform to speak about this issue and it's way too much about him and you don't see that kind of brokenness that you would expect to see. I was shocked! It was such a "disconnect" of what I would have expected to see and what I didn't entertain.

You might say, "Well Bruce that's a little judgmental on your part" and maybe it is. Maybe my expectations were too high of what I would expect to see in one's life and here someone is going to profess that they that have been forgiven by something that I would just expect that there would be some level of brokenness, self control and altered behavior in a sense. Those are people who have been forgiven of a particular offense.

What is fair of the world to expect of a group of people that claim that they have been forgiven of all their sins? What is fair for the world to expect in terms of our behavior or the way that we relate to them? Here is what we are telling the world? Jeremiah 33 says that all of our sins have been forgiven by God. Hebrews 9 describes that this forgiveness has come at an incredibly high price. It has come through blood for without blood there is no forgiveness of sins. It has come through the blood of the Son of God Himself, Jesus Christ. Jeremiah 31 declares to other people that God has said that He'll remember our sin no more. He is not going to count our sins against us and remember them no more. Colossians 2:13-14 says *13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14 by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.* We declare that to people.

Isn't it fair that the world would look at us and say "Boy, people who have been forgiven of that much would be different people"? You wouldn't stumble across that later having known them for quite some period of time. That's a different person. I'm not suggesting that's a person that wears a cross around their neck but wouldn't it be fair for them to expect that they would see in us some particular behavior, mentality or mindset? In other words when the world looks at us do they say 'there go the forgiven'? Wow, those people see themselves as sinners saved by the grace of God. Those people see themselves as people primarily that are forgiven, once guilty but now forgiven. It is the humility and graciousness that comes from that. The patience for people that comes from that is amazing but they see themselves as forgiven and that their primarily forgiven.

Think about the hardest things that come to your mind right now that God teaches us in the New Testament as He teaches us how to live amongst each other. Think about the most difficult things and challenges that He puts upon our

life where we are to turn the other cheek or to submit ourselves to every bad authority that God has placed us under. That's a challenge. That's difficult to do. It's difficult to think of other's interests above our own interests or that we're to love the unlovely or that we're to forgive yet again those who continue to offend us. Think about all the really challenging things that God says in the Epistles that almost feel impossible to be able to live up to.

I believe all of those things are altered by your perspective of yourself. If I can see myself primarily as forgiven versus entitled, my pride of looking at myself then the way that I relate to other people becomes a more compassionate response and forbearing response. I pray that the world would look at us and see us Christians as the forgiving and certainly not the judgmental. I pray that the reputation of Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama would not be looked at as "There are the judgmental on the hill." But they would look and say "There are the forgiven." Don't think for a second that a pagan world can't look at people declaring themselves as the forgiven and think that is pious, and probably so but as they encounter us will it prove that true or untrue. As they engage with us in our walk with the Lord or our lifestyle they will either see that we are people who truly do see ourselves as people who have been desperately in need of forgiveness and have received that forgiveness through Jesus Christ to be freed from the penalty of hell or they will see us as people who at least express to others that we deserve salvation that if God we're going to save anybody it would be me. If God we're going to save anybody on the face of this earth I would have to be in the top 100. If that is what we are portraying to other people then the Gospel of Jesus Christ that we communicate to them is certainly something less than attractive in their life.

With the view of seeing yourself primarily as forgiven there is great freedom. It's not freedom to sin again and the Scripture is very clear about that. You don't use your freedom as a cover up for sin but with being forgiven there is great freedom. There is great freedom to not live in light of to be consumed by what the world thinks of you. If you see yourself as being forgiven then the One Judge has already ruled. The One Judge has declared you forgiven and you are now a project unto righteousness that He will carry out to its completion. Seeing yourself as forgiven gives you the freedom to go into sharing the Gospel with other people not worrying about whether or not that person will think that you are worthy to be sharing the Gospel with them, because you know that you're not. You're portraying to them not a perfect person that thinks you need to come over to the other side and be one of us, but you're portraying yourself to them accurately as a sinner saved by the grace of God, desiring to share that same grace with you, no better or no worse.

Why is it that we don't tend to live like forgiven people? The Lord teaches us several different things about that. One is He would say to us "You might not be portraying yourself as forgiven or seeing yourself as forgiven before the world and therefore betraying it because you're not forgiven." I think sometimes we shy

away from that answer. So one reason that I don't primarily see myself as forgiven, is that I might not be forgiven. I might have surrounded myself with church stuff, Christians and the common grace of God where I have actually fooled myself into thinking I'm a believer when I'm not. So the reason that God's grace is not that amazing to me is because I have never received God's amazing grace. I've been around it and seen it in other people. I have experienced it in other situations but the bottom line is I have never really been forgiven of all my sins. So I am not forgiven and for that person clearly the path is to go before the Lord to confess your sins before Him and claim that ultimate forgiveness of all your sins before the Heavenly Father.

Secondly, maybe it's because you're taking God's forgiveness for granted. Maybe as we see God's forgiveness applied to us we see that more as an event. For instance, back then when I became a Christian God forgave me of all my sin and so I don't wake up each and everyday feeling a need for forgiveness or when I sin, which I do, I'm not as consumed, bothered or that level of hatred by that because I no longer see myself separated from God and I just figure God will deal with that. Here I take for granted the forgiveness of God applied to my life.

Then thirdly, it's possibly because I'm grieving the Holy Spirit through some un-confessed sin. Why is it that I don't wake up and see myself as forgiven? It is because I am grieving the Holy Spirit in my life by the un-confessed sin that resides in my life. How is it then that I can know that I am forgiven? There are many different ways and the Spirit works in and through our life but one test I would give you is this because of the way God's Word teaches us about forgiveness. If you want to know if you truly are forgiven then you can ask yourself to what degree am I living a forgiving life? A forgiven life will absolutely yield a forgiving life. If you see yourself as primarily as forgiven it will absolutely yield a forgiving life. It would be hypocritically inconsistent to yield anything else.

Matthew 18 is a challenging passage of Scripture that talks about how we relate one to another and it's a tremendous study for you to go through in terms of dealing with sin with a brother. In Matthew 18 on the foundation of discussing how brothers and sisters should relate to one another in the Lord He goes into this to give them a parable. Matthew 18:21-34 says

21 Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" 22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven. 23 "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. 24 When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 25 And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. 26 So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' 27 And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released

him and forgave him the debt. 28 But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' 29 So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' 30 He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. 31 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. 32 Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33 And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' 34 And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt."

This is a powerful parable here. I would suggest this to you. It doesn't take a Christian or even an adult to understand that parable. It's somewhat of a ridiculous parable in the amount of money that he uses to communicate the two debts that are owed. I would put it this way. If you were going to look somewhere in the ball park of minimum wage you are comparing basically \$40 to \$30 million dollars. The debt that he owed his master was 20 times his life wages. There is no way he could ever possibly pay it even when he pleads for mercy, "leave me alone and I'll come back and pay you everything." He couldn't possibly do it. We are not told how on earth that guy generated that kind of debt and yet what was owed to him was the equivalent of just a few days of wages for him. So looking at the amount of \$40 to \$30 million Christ is using a ridiculous parable clearly to make His point. In Colossians 3:13b He says, *"...as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive."* I prefer that verse to say "as the Lord has forgiven you, it would go well if you would forgive others." Think about forgiving others. The Lord has forgiven you and so you should give a lot of careful deliberation to forgiving other people. I would much prefer that the verse said it that way. It's a command. God is telling us we must forgive others and He is very serious about that. As a matter of fact I left out one verse at the end of Matthew 18. He walks them through the parable and then He says in Matthew 18:35, *35 So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."* So also what? So also *'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that 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 should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."* This is commanded that you must forgive. A forgiven life must yield a forgiving life.

As He rolls out the Lord's Prayer to us and we pray to our heavenly Father "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors..." and we just think those are just two things that correlate together and is nice. It flows very well together in that prayer. One of the places that the Lord's Prayer is found is Matthew 6:12 where it mentions we are to forgive our debtors. He goes on to say in Matthew 6:14-15, *14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will*

also forgive you, (sounds strong but it gets stronger) 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. You can't go on unforgiving. Do not be fooled for I will not be mocked, a man reaps what he sows (Galatians 6:7).

At this point you should say "Time out, I'd like to take issue with this sermon because 1 John tells us that if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness, now you just said that God was not going to forgive us of some sin. So if you're telling me that if I'm not forgiving my brother and I have sin in my life where I want God to forgive me of this over here then you're saying He's not going to forgive me of that sin yet 1 John 1:9 says He will forgive me of that sin if I confess to Him and then He will cleanse me of all unrighteousness." Picture it this way. You are working a job and you are lying to your boss at every turn. You are being very deceptive to your boss. At the same time you're embezzling money from the company and you come to God and say "I would like for You to forgive me of lying to my boss. I don't want to any longer lie to my boss so please forgive me of lying to my boss." The Holy Spirit says, "What about the embezzlement?" You say, "We'll deal with that later." So what you are saying is you're repentant of lying to your boss, at least that is what you are trying to convince God of, and yet you're not repentant of this over here (the embezzlement). God knows your heart and by the way so do you. You're repentant of the one thing but not repentant of the other. God looks at that and He says "Therefore the repentant of lying to your boss you're not repentant of that. You just want out of that." You just want to articulate those magic words before the Lord and be forgiven of what that is. There is no true repentance in your heart about this.

He says this to us as we come before Him. We want to come before our heavenly Father in hearts of repentance, right? So what's the peak of doing that? It is in the concept of worship when we come to the Lord's Table and take communion at the Lord's Table He says, "Stop, are you in need of forgiveness from other people or are you in need to forgive other people? If so leave this and go take care of that and then come back and partake of this fellowship and have communion with Me." Withholding forgiveness is sin. It is sin for a Christian to withhold forgiveness of someone else. "As the Lord has forgiven you so you must also forgive."

As the parable told us, one, it is the epitome of hypocrisy not to do that. Could any one have possibly sinned against you the equivalent amount of what you have sinned against God? Is that possible? No, that is impossible therefore we are in the parable. We have this small \$40 amount and we're ignoring this \$30 million dollar amount that we have been forgiven. So Christ has forgiven us as Christians so we must also forgive. So Clearly God is teaching us that we are not to withhold forgiveness to other people. To do that is clearly a sin. It's a cancer. It's a root of bitterness and the ultimate victim of withholding forgiveness to someone else is ourselves. When I withhold forgiveness of someone else then I

am victimizing myself because I'm hindering my walk with God. I'm hindering my prayers, my relationship with Him, God Almighty and not the other person. When I withhold forgiveness I'm desiring because I want to be judged but I'm desiring to impact the other person. I am really impacting myself and my own walk with the Lord. "As the Lord has forgiven you so you must also forgive."

So how is it that the Lord has forgiven us? What can we learn from the way the Lord has forgiven us? Because if we're to forgive others the same way He has forgiven us then we need to have some idea and some concept of how He has forgiven us. First of all the Lord sought us out to forgive us. He came into the world to save sinners. He took on the body of a human. While we were yet sinners He died for us. He sought us out to forgive us. I tend to be willing to forgive as long as the other person will jump through all the appropriate hoops. Forgive, as Christ has forgiven you, Bruce. Seek them out to forgive.

Secondly, He forgives when we ask. When we put our repentant heart before the Lord and we seek forgiveness from God there is no debate in heaven. God doesn't say, "I don't know, we've done a lot of forgiveness this week. How many times have we forgiven Bruce this week? He's used up his limit this week." There is no debate in heaven. Of course your sins are forgiven. "As the Lord has forgiven you so you must also forgive." In a sense this issue of forgiveness when fully embraced becomes the release of all the tension in our relationships. It becomes the release in our marriages, our parenting and our business relationships. Having the opportunity to extend forgiveness to other people we have the freedom in Christ and that's a testimony to God.

Thirdly, He forgives even when we don't ask. Take your mind for a minute to the cross. It's not recorded anywhere that people who are doing this to Christ are at the same time asking to be forgiven yet Christ from the cross says "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." So I believe and I think there are examples in Scriptures that there were those there watching the cross that would eventually ask for forgiveness specifically. There is the centurion that says, "Truly this is the Son of God" and so I believe there are those who are going to ask for forgiveness but haven't asked yet and so Christ looks at them and says, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Christ forgives us even before we ask for that forgiveness.

So how do we relate one to another? We forgive even before that forgiveness is sought after us, we extend that forgiveness. Remember the friends of the paralytic? They take him and put him before Jesus and they go with one expectation and that is that he is able to walk. When they lower the paralytic down before Jesus they don't say "Please forgive him of his sins and then if You have time tell him he can walk." They just lower him down before Jesus hoping that Jesus will look and say "This man is a paralytic so I will heal him for him to be able to walk." No, what does Jesus say? He says, "Your sins are forgiven." Jesus forgives us of our sins even before we ask for those sins to be forgiven. As

Christ has forgiven us so we also must forgive other people. Where our need for forgiveness increases, so does His deliverance for forgiveness. That's hard for us. As we have a need to forgive one another some where inside of us we have a limit as to how much we can extend that forgiveness but with Christ as my sin increases and my need for forgiveness increases before Him so His grace abounds all the more and His forgiveness of my sin increases as well to completely cover all of the sin that is in my life.

Finally His forgiveness knows no end. That's a powerful statement when He says to him "How many times should I forgive my brother, seven times? No, seventy times seven." For those of you analytical people that does not mean 490 times. He is not giving them a new number by which you can get there. No, what He is saying to them is the forgiveness knows no end. So you just keep on forgiving? Yes. So they ask for it again and you forgive them again? Yes, how many times has Christ forgiven you? Has He run out of His forgiveness for us when we go before Him? How often do you ask God to forgive you? Do you seek it daily or hourly? Does He ever say "Enough! That's it you have used up your portion"? No, He does not say or do that. His forgiveness knows no end and neither should ours.

That's a challenge because He tells us as Christ has forgiven you so you also should forgive others and clearly we would have to say to the Lord "But we ourselves are sinners so we struggle to be able to do this. Can we really offer up that particular level of forgiveness? Is it really plausible to expect that we as believers could extend that type of repetitive, comprehensive and pure forgiveness one to another?" No, we cannot do it in and of ourselves but by the power of the Holy Spirit, absolutely.

I'm amazed at a very brief statement that is made in Scripture but it is so telling to me. Stephen is chosen to be a deacon so he begins his ministry. Four sentence later in the Scriptures they are stoning Stephen. Stephen with his eyes fixed upon heaven and on his Savior Jesus Christ says, "Father, forgive them, they don't know what they're doing." He is saying this about the ones who are stoning him. Stephen was a man just like you. He was a believer just like you. It wasn't of Stephen that he was able to do that but it was the power of the Holy Spirit yet he had his eyes fixed on God and not on himself. So with his eyes fixed upon God and full of the Holy Spirit he could extend this forgiveness that was necessary.

This last week I had the opportunity to look at a video titled "As We Forgive" and this was the story of Uganda and the terrible tragedy that has taken place in Uganda with the killing of a million people and the aftermath of that. It traces two different people through this video. You are able to watch them and here are two people that have been arrested by the government for the sins they did of killing other people and then they are forgiven by the government. They are released from prison and then they go out to seek forgiveness of the families of the people

they have killed. You see that and say “Wow is that possible? Is it possible that a person could forgive that level of offense?” You watch as this one goes and begins to communicate to this one lady who he thought he had killed and her family who he did kill. He is able to communicate his forgiveness and you see that she has the ability to forgive him. She says to him that she has been forgiven much by God and therefore she can forgive him of this.

Then you follow other story of the man who had taken the family of this other lady and she's is left with this child that she was actually pregnant with during that time. She is left by herself to raise this child. She can't understand so she looks at him and says, “Why do you need my forgiveness? You have the forgiveness of the country. You are out of jail. You suffer no more for what you have done and so why do you need my forgiveness?” There is a mediator there to kind of help this relationship reconcile and he is able to articulate to her that to the same degree that he needs your forgiveness you need to forgive. You can clearly see in these two different ladies you see this one wrapped up in the bitterness and the stranglehold that has on her heart and she is incapable of dealing with it until she extends that forgiveness to that man. As she begins to communicate and articulate you find out that she has not been back in church since that incident happened years before. She has not fellowship with God since that happened. You see the grip that this has on that particular lady's life.

As you read this, I'm not sure what has a grip on you. Are you in need of forgiveness right now of the Lord or someone else? Are you in need right now of living a forgiven life? Or are you in need to forgive someone? Maybe the person you need to forgive doesn't know you have done something or that they have done something to you but you need to forgive them. You need to release that. As the Lord has forgiven you so you must also forgive them and to experience the taste of that freedom that comes with the release of that forgiveness. I'd like to give you a few moments to process and pray about this matter of forgiveness. I don't know what the Lord would impress upon you whether it's your need of forgiveness or your need to live a forgiving life as a testimony to other people or your need to extend forgiveness to someone else but take a few moments and spend some time with the Lord. Be honest with the Lord. Get rid of those shackles that are upon your heart. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Oh Lord Your amazing love and incredible grace is poured out upon us. We have been forgiven much, far beyond what we could articulate. Lord, would You graciously allow us to experience but a taste of that so that we might know and feel the magnitude of the forgiveness that You have extended to us? Lord, I pray if any one reading this in need of forgiveness from You that You would open Your arms wide to them, You would hear their confession and forgive them of their sins. I pray that You would give us hearts of forgiveness that we might live forgiving lives before those around us. Lord, go before us and give us the ability

to forgive those that we need to and give us the strength and the boldness and the compassion to articulate that forgiveness to them with graciousness and in love. Lord, thank You that we have been forgiven by the power of Your Spirit. Help us to forgive others, not for our sake but for Your glory, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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