

Gateway Fellowship Church

Marathon Faith

Part Eleven-Constant Forgiveness

November 5, 2018

Teacher: Kyle Volkmer, Teaching Pastor

(Playing Elvis Record of All Shook up)

Music—A well'a bless my soul

What'sa wrong with me?

I'm itchin' like a man in a fuzzy tree

My friends say I'm actin' wild as a bug

I'm in love

I'm all shook up

I'm in love

I'm all shook up

I'm all shook up

I'm all shoo

I'm all sh

The danger of bitterness is that it repeats itself. I'm going to give you a window in. I'm going to tell you people why Kyle is the way that he is. Are you ready? I'm going to give you stories from my childhood. So there I was, I was a little boy, a Boy Scout. I was in Webelos and I went with my brother on a Boy Scout camping trip. We began to go on a hike. I followed my brother and I trusted my brother. We went down this road and we went out into the woods and we were hiking. I drank my water and ate my snacks really quickly and we were hiking for like an hour then an hour and a half. I asked my brother Ryan, "Where are we going?" Finally, we get to this tree and Ryan says to me, "You stay right here and I will be back." 10 minutes goes by. Then 20 minutes go by. 20 minutes turns to 45 and then an hour and fifteen. "Ryan, Ryan where are you?" My brother left me out in the woods. My brother was mean to me. I began to fight my way through the trees in the forest and I eventually found a trail and then a gravel road. I walked down this gravel road for 2 hours and then eventually a man came down in an old white pick up

truck. He was an older man and he said to me, "Son get inside." Luckily, he was a good man, because I am here today. My brother was mean to me.

This continued all throughout my childhood. This one time I had eaten a piece of corn for lunch and I was at JC Penney's as a little boy. I was picking the corn out of my teeth in front of that mirror column. It's like mirrors on all the sides. I'm there picking my teeth out. My brother came up behind me and palm struck me into the mirror and I lost my front tooth. I give you complete permission to laugh here, ok? My brother was mean to me. Just so we are clear here, I had good parents people. My mom was the President of the PTA and everything in between. She was the homeroom mom and the mom who brought the cupcakes. I had a good father. He was the coach of the baseball team, YMCA everyday. I had good parents. My brother was just very smart. He was on the Mensa scale. He did work for the FBI, and we all know how those people can be. That's the one political joke of the day. But my brother was mean to me. I will keep going, I have a whole list here.

One time, my dad's favorite show growing up was Unsolved Mysteries. Anybody ever see that scary show? No little kid should ever watch that. I watched that show as a little kid and it had aliens and UFO's. My brother spent all night, most nights, telling me that these aliens were going to get me at night. They were going to stick glass tubes under the door and fill the room with toxic gas and you would be knocked out before you even knew what happened. They would abduct you. He terrified me as a kid. So much so, that he got a white balloon and blew it up and drew black alien eyes on it and he stood outside the window and he would raise up the balloon and I would scream, "Mom and Dad look out my window!" "You can't see it? Oh, I must be going crazy." My brother was mean to me.

One time my dad gave us a pair of handcuffs. Not the cheap plastic ones, real ones. I always lost when we played Cops and Robbers and would end up the one being handcuffed. I had lost this particular game and had been captured prisoner and handcuffed to a telephone pole with real handcuffs people. I lived in Brazoria county and there were fire ants in Brazoria county. Oh yeah, my brother was mean to me. Here I am covered head to toe in fire ants so much so that the neighbor came outside, and I am screaming and he sprays me down to get rid of the ants.

My brother took me to a haunted house once. It was one of those things where you pay to get scared and this is probably why I HATE Halloween. My brother didn't even have the courage to go in with me. He just kicked me in, paid the money and I walked through this and I am stuck in this circus themed house with killer clowns and blood. I am terrified, and I am terrified of clowns. When I see a clown today, I am 35 years old, I reach for my 45 gun. That builds trust issues because the people working the haunted house are trying to get you out. It's like, "Yes I will go with you man covered in blood." I don't understand why we celebrate Halloween like that. Proverbs says that All those who hate Me love death. That was the only thing I will say about that.

And the Crème de la Crème of the brother stories. We had a nice 2 story house in a nice neighborhood and it had a balcony. A huge 15 ft drop from the top to the bottom. My brother had beaten me up and tied my up with ropes and I had lost a battle once again and he's hanging me over the balcony with ropes all bound up like Houdini. But I wasn't Houdini. He was screaming at me, "Where's the rebel base?" I answered, "I will never tell" and then unfortunately that rope slipped, and I fell 15 feet onto my head. It's a miracle that my legs work. You see my brother was mean to me. Although these are very funny they were wounds and hurts on the soul of a young boy. This little boy would have to learn to Choose to Forgive. For wounds that never mend, fester to bitterness and ruin.

We are aptly at the end of our series called Marathon Faith. Have you enjoyed it? I would like to thank Pastor John for this wonderful book. Accurately and Intently God has orchestrated that the last topic should be Forgiveness. For you see, if there is going to be a single thing that will knock you out of your race as a Christian, it is going to be Forgiveness. Are you going to choose to forgive, or are you going to live in bitterness? John says this in Marathon Faith, "Bitterness is being hurt and unwilling to forgive. It's not by accident the author of Hebrews 11 writes fourteen verses later to a runner finishing his race, "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. (Hebrews 12:15)

Winkie Pratney says this, "Bitterness is the seed of hell." It's the seed of hell because it always grows, and it always spreads. It doesn't just stay in one part. It begins to spread to multiple parts and multiple families. Ultimately spreading to multiple neighbors and communities. Hear me now, the only way to combat bitterness, is constant forgiveness. No one apart from Jesus Christ modeled constant forgiveness more than the life of David. David was a king in the bible. But he didn't start there. He started off as a little shepherd boy. For our text this morning, we are going to go through the entire book of II Samuel as a bird's eye view. We are trying to increase the biblical literacy in this church, so my challenge to you today is for you to read the book of II Samuel. This is how it starts off; David was just a shepherd boy. Some scholars and some rabbis say that David was illegitimate. That meant he might have had a different mother than most of his brothers, but he had the same father. His father was messing around. There was an illegitimacy to David. Notice that when Samuel the prophet comes to anoint one of Jesse's sons as king, is David there? No, David's not there. He is out taking care of the sheep in the hills and pastures. But David chose to forgive. He chose to forgive when the questioned his legitimacy. When they called him a bastard and mocked him, he chose to forgive. Will you choose to forgive?

When he went to the armies to see his brothers and there's the one mocking God. We all know the story of David and Goliath. Goliath is mocking the power of God and the power of Israel. David in his heart rises up in holy indignation and anger and wants to fight the enemies of God. Yet they try to fit him in armor that is way too big for him. That was to insult David. Yet David chose to forgive. David kills Goliath and his praise and fame begins to be known and his name gets to be said all around the city gates and all around the town. The name of David begins to be praised. Saul takes notice of this and invites David from the pasture to the palace. David is now playing his harp in the palace and singing songs and praises to God before this selfish king. The songs of worship can't resonate in a selfish heart. Saul begins to be angry and he begins to throw spears at David. Can you imagine if our worship leader had to dodge

spears up here? But did David pick up that spear and throw it back? No, he chose to forgive. Will you choose to forgive? See Saul only saw David as a future Saul. You see people the way you are, and bitterness will affect your perception. This turmoil between Saul and David always increased but David was always willing to honor and bless Saul, but Saul wouldn't have it. David has to flee in persecution. David goes from pasture to palace to now he is in hiding in caves, starving to death. He went from having the highest place of honor, to now having to hide and fight for his life in a cave. People are coming to him and saying I see your heart and I want to follow you. David is saying no—there is a king in Israel. He is always pushing back to God's anointed. He is always honoring and never receiving. He isn't building an army, but rather he is humbly trying to submit and negotiate this difficult situation in which the king who is anointed by God, wants to kill him.

It just so happens that in the providence of God, that Saul, the king who is trying to kill him, goes into the cave that David is hiding out in. I think sometimes God has a sense of humor because Saul literally was using the restroom. That's like the most defenseless position there is. And yet David who is there and has every opportunity to kill Saul and has the dagger in his hand, raises it up. All of David's guys are whispering, "Do it! Do it! Kill him. Kill him and you will be king." David cuts the hem of Saul's garment and backs away. David was so tender to the spirit of God that even that piece of the king's garment in his hand, he looked at it and said, "This doesn't belong here. This belongs to the king." He repented that he had even done that. Oh, the heart and tenderness and humility of David.

The selfishness of Saul continued, and his anger swelled. His pride increased to the point where he thought he could take every nation. The nations beat Saul in military action and Saul died with a dagger in his own hand, with his own dagger he killed himself in his own shame. Oh, the heart of David! When David heard that the king who had tried to kill him had died, David wept and mourned. He loved his enemies. Maybe you have heard that before.

David becomes king. David becomes the anointed one of Israel. He takes the city of Jerusalem and there's nothing but peace and prosperity, blessing and authority and anointing. This is the pinnacle of Israel's history. This is the time that all of the prophets had foretold. This is the time. Everyone is saying that David is the Messiah. You see, it's always dangerous when there's a crown on your head. Sometimes our blessings and our prosperities can lead to our ruin. This was King David's great mistake. It says that in the times when kings are off to war, David remained at home. Which meant that he had stopped advancing the kingdom. He stopped obeying the promise. He stopped going after the Lord's inheritance. It says that he saw a woman from his balcony. It was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. People always paint this as a matter of lust. David had many wives. Ultimately it was a little bit of the heart of Saul in David. That there was something that he couldn't have, and he wanted it. David sinned against God. He committed adultery with Bathsheba.

Then comes the prophet of God. The prophet came. But before the prophet came, David does what we all do. He told his General, Joab, to take Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba, and to put him into the thick of the battle and then retreat, so that Uriah dies. We always try to cover up and manipulate to cover our

sins. The prophet of God sees right through it all and tells David a parable. There was a farmer who had one precious sheep and he treated the sheep like it was a little daughter. He loved the sheep and everywhere the children would go, there was the sheep. It was their pet, it was their friend. Then as the story goes, the wicked King comes and had flocks upon flocks of sheep, but he takes the sheep from the family and sacrifices it and kills it. David in the middle of this story looks at the prophet and says, "This man has to be punished." The prophet says, "This man is you." David is convicted of his sin. He weeps for seven days in remorse. He said, "God, Bathsheba is pregnant. Can you spare the life?" God told him, "No!" For you see, forgiveness had always strengthened the life of David. But David still had to live under the consequence of his sins. So many times, we ask God for forgiveness, and yet God is warning us of the consequences. This story begins to unfold and compound in a very dangerous way. It's just this one sin. Yes, David repented and yes, God did forgive him. "For against you and you only have I sinned and done this evil in your sight that you should be blameless in your speech when you judge." God forgave David, but David still had to live with the consequences.

You think your family is messed up? Listen to what happens. Children begin to kill children. Amnon rapes his sister Tamar. All of a sudden, one of David's sons, Absalom who was from Bathsheba—you see this consequence, there's this line of shame and unforgiveness and rebellion. Absalom begins to grow in bitterness towards David because his sister was raped, and David had nothing but forgiveness. In the heart of Absalom, he was always saying, "Why won't he punish? Why won't he exact vengeance?" For you see the heart of David was always one of forgiveness. Even more so after he had sinned. Then the cycle begins to take place between David and Absalom. You see Absalom was hurt by David. Just like an arrowhead in the side, if the arrowhead is never removed, it begins to fester and turn into bitterness. It begins to fill the corridors of your mind and your thoughts. It's always there. A hurt turns to bitterness and bitterness turns into a rebellion. That's the thing about bitter people. They always build armies. They always gather unto themselves people of the same like mind. People with the same negative words. People with the same outlook on life. Bitter people always build armies.

Absalom is building an army right under the nose of David in the very city of David which is Jerusalem. What is David's heart? Forgiveness. Absalom come home. Forgiveness. So much so that there begins to be a war in Israel. The armies of David and Absalom meet on the battle field. David's one request is this: Generals, win the war; but don't kill Absalom. Don't kill the one who is trying to overthrow your throne? Don't kill the one who is wrecking your kingdom and running it rampant with destruction and ruin? You want us to give mercy to Absalom? The Generals are divided on this. David says, "Do not kill my son." Most people when they think of the life of David, and they hear this phrase, that David was a man after God's own heart, they always think that David had a heart of praise or of worship. I'm sorry, you're wrong. A man after God's own heart is this: God has always, always, always, wanted to forgive. That He is slow to anger and quick to love. That He is merciful and compassionate. That He has always wanted the best for you. You have to do some introspection. How do I know if I am hurt or bitter? That's a really good question. In reality I honestly believe that almost half of the people that go to the hospital for medical issues is because of this. Whether it's unresolved conflict, or anxiety, or mental issues. It all seems to stem from an issue of hurt or offense. How do we know if we are hurt? The first thing is this: We will have a record player in our mind. It will just keep going around and around the same hurt and the same offense. You just keep playing over and over again the same thing in your mind expecting a

different result. This my friends is a sign of hurt and bitterness. Not only does it repeat in your mind, but you also have a file cabinet in your mind. You see how easy it was for me to show all of the things that my brother had done to me? You see that? We have a file cabinet. We are able to recall with pinpoint accuracy all of the details of the hurt. That is a sign that you are hurt and that you are bitter or that you are easily offended.

One time I caught a little toenail hanging on my big toe and it began to turn go into the flesh of my foot and my whole toe became infected. It was twice the size of my other big toe. It was red, and it was nasty, and I could literally feel my heart beat in my toe. That's a long way. When people were walking near me, it was like I had spider sense because I could feel them walking. You see that? Infection is like unto bitterness and there is an increased sensitivity. You just hear that person's name, you just think of that person and all of a sudden, you're right back where you started. You are bitter my friend. It's like a wound that is infected. You barely touch the hairs on the arm and yet it's a super sensitivity. You are bitter my friend.

The final and most powerful test to see whether you're bitter or hurt is can you bless? The reason that they called Jesus the Son of David, was that when He was on the cross, all He could say was this, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Can you bless? Can you bless out of brokenness? Some of you right now in your minds are thinking, "You do not know what you're asking me." I'm saying this to you, "You do not know the consequences of holding on to bitterness." The main text is this: When those two armies meet, Absalom lead the army against his father. Absalom's hair, in retreat, was caught in a tree and he was hanging suspended in this tree, struggling for life. Because of bitterness and unforgiveness, the one thing that the father saw was the consequence of bitterness and unforgiveness. Absalom dies in the tree. Oh, you see friends, this in the providence and mystery of God is a window in. He is showing you that the purpose of the son hanging in the tree was unforgiveness and bitterness, resentment and hurt.

You see, the cross speaks forgiveness. You see my brother, who for most of my life I hated, He got right with God. Then he came to me and he said these very simple words, " I'm sorry for the way that I treated you when we were young. I know it was wrong and I'm sorry." It was like someone was turning that old broken record recording backwards and undoing all of the hurt and bitterness. It was reversing all of the cycle of hurt, bitterness, rebellion and deception I had in my mind. Somehow the forgiveness that he was asking of me, was actually my forgiveness. It was through this that I began to say God, would you forgive me? That's the power of forgiveness friends. That's the power of the gospel is that it can turn the cycle back. What was once hurt, bitterness, deception can now be honor, and life, and blessing. That's the power of the gospel. That's the power of the message that I preached to you. That repentance and remission of sins—the word for remission is nothing but the word forgiveness. This is the power of forgiveness friends. This is the power of the blood of Jesus—it speaks forgiveness. Right now in your mind there is going to be a face and an offense. It's going to be screaming at you. Very simply, you have to be like David. You have to choose to forgive. Otherwise, you won't have the heart of David and you will have the heart of Absalom, which leads itself to ruin, deception and despair.

Prayer

KDD

11/5/18