

Triple Catch to Moving Mountains

Episode 2

This is our 2nd of five episodes on the **Triple Catch to Moving Mountains**.

Let's take a moment to review where we have been, If we want to have great obstacles removed from our life, if we want to instantly experience the dead and dying trees withering before us, first we have the requirement for each of us to have faith. **Check**, God has given each of us a measure of faith (presumably bigger than a mustard seed). Therefore, we are fully equipped for action; we have been given what is necessary.

Next, when we exercise our faith and pray for things to be done in our life, we must not doubt, or we must not let anything cause us to doubt. But being in the *passive* voice, we do not really have control over that part of our experience. Therefore, we have the requirement for God to give us **hearts that do not doubt**.

As for me, I cannot check that one off the list yet. That is a big one. So how does this happen? Like the woman with the unjust judge, do we beg God over and over and over and over to give us a heart that does not doubt? Personally, I think the answer to this question is right in front of our faces, but it comes from an angle we would never expect, and so I believe we have, for the most part, missed it. And this leads us to the **TRIPPLE CATCH**.

Returning to **Mark 11**, we find another powerful use of the word "**but**" – which establishes for us the **TRIPPLE CATCH**, and it explains the process by which God gives us a heart that does not doubt.

Mark 11:20-25

The next morning as they passed by the fig tree he had cursed, the disciples noticed it had withered from the roots up. Peter remembered what Jesus had said to the tree on the previous day and exclaimed, "Look, Rabbi! The fig tree you cursed has withered and died!" Then Jesus said to the disciples, "Have faith in God. I tell you the truth, you can say to this mountain, 'May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and it will happen. But you must

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really believe it will happen and have no doubt in your heart. I tell you, you can pray for anything, and if you believe that you've received it, it will be yours. **But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too.**"

As I said, this is a huge "but" and it **MUST NOT** be dismissed or passed by or separated from the context. Our receiving what we have prayed for (moving mountains in our lives and withering trees that do not bear fruit), is conditioned upon our forgiving anyone against whom we hold a grudge. Yes, anyone!

In fact, in **Luke** where Jesus speaks of uprooting the mulberry tree, He first says, "Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him."¹ And of course, we are all familiar with the fact that there is no limit to this requirement to forgive. Peter pushed this issue. "Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."² In other words, there really is no limit to this demand.

"But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too."³ And with "forgive" being in the *present* tense, it is not something we are to eventually get to, but it is to be our present experience, our **now**, so we might receive the forgiveness of the Father.

This **TRIPLE CATCH** touches on a very sensitive area with the Father, and there is a very good reason why this is so. But before we get to the reason, let us address this requirement that we must forgive so that we may be forgiven.

Let me just say, it does not make sense to me. After all, didn't this issue of my not doing things right get settled at the cross? After all, He told us that if we confess our sins, He faithful and

¹ **Luke 17:3-6**

² **Matthew 18:21-22**

³ **Mark 11:25**

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righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.⁴ And since Jesus died for our sins while we were still sinners, and he forgave all our transgressions, and every hostile accusation that could ever be made against us was nailed to the cross,⁵ then why is my forgiving someone a **CATCH** to being forgiven by God?

Dual Realities

The point is that there are dual realities for those who *trust* Christ. We have our earthly existence and all that stems from it, which plays-out in our relationships. And our sin, our unforgiveness, clearly impacts our relationships and makes quite the mess of all things; hence, this is the realm where forgiveness is an issue. It is all very practical. Yet, when it comes to our connectedness to God and the condemnation for our sin, which would otherwise separate us from God, that has been dealt with on the cross, and there no longer remains a basis for our condemnation nor our separation.⁶

The Flesh = Death

Now what I am going to say next is by way of a basic review, to get us all on the same page in terms of the practical implications of living from our *flesh* and letting sin (and in this case unforgiveness) have a stronghold in our lives. Again, this has nothing to do with our justification nor our standing of peace with God, but it does impact what we practically experience in our minds, our hearts, our soul, and our bodies, as we journey through this world.

Romans 8:5-14

Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it

⁴ ***1 John 1:9***

⁵ ***Colossians 2:8-15***

⁶ ***Psalm 103:12; Isaiah 43:25***

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never will. That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God. But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.) And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God. The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you. Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

Simply said, when we let the *flesh* have authority in our lives, we experience “*death*” in our minds, our emotions, our souls, and even our physical bodies expressed in all manner of troubles, torments, distress, pain, anguish, and decay. And this is addressing our present-day experience, our **now**, as **Romans 8:12** is rendered in the *present* tense. For if you **now** live by its dictates (the *flesh*), you will **now** die. But if through the power of the Spirit you **now** put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will dig down deep in your soul and make the decision to live.⁷

And what I find disturbing, although it does give us a clue as to why this issue of forgiveness is so important, is that the deeds of the *flesh* (malice and all deceit, and hypocrisy and envy, and all slander, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, gossip, arrogance, disturbances”),⁸ are all rooted in unforgiveness—Yes unforgiveness. These are all relational issues which stem forth from pain, disappointment, betrayal, and hurt.

If you slow yourself down and think about your wounds and those who have hurt you, I am sure at some level you can connect to each of these deeds of the *flesh*. Even the less obvious

⁷ “to live” is rendered in the *future middle indicative*

⁸ **1 Peter 2:1; Galatians 5:20; 2 Corinthians 12:20**

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ones like envy are attached to unforgiveness, for sometimes it is so hard for us to understand why those who hurt us seem to get away with treating us so terrible, while we are left dealing with the damage. That is envy.

“But if through the power of the Spirit you **now** put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will dig down deep in your soul and make the decision to *live*.” Seeing as though each of these “deeds” are rooted in unforgiveness, the obvious means by which we **now** put to death these deeds of our sinful nature, is through the pathway of forgiveness.

Thus, the reason God wants us to forgive to be forgiven is that when we abide in these deeds of the *flesh*, we literally turn ourselves from God, we look in the opposite direction of His love, we obsess on the pain, the hurt, the betrayal, the disappointment, and our need to protect ourselves; thus, we live depending upon ourselves and not Him. But to know and experience practical forgiveness from God, the kind of release and freedom in our now, we must be found living in Him.

Unforgiveness

It is extremely hard to find someone who lives without unforgiveness buried in the cracks and crevices of their soul. Often it is buried so deep behind their pain and self-protection that they are not even aware of it. And because unforgiveness is a common experience across all of humanity, we do not really give it much mind, and, tragically, it has become a part of our most intimate relationships.

Unforgiveness is also something over which we feel powerless to deal with because of the strength of the emotions which undergird its power in our lives. It is surrounded by pain and fear, and unforgiveness is found in all those places that we simply do not want to go to ever again. The memory of it all is just too overwhelming.

Clearly, unforgiveness is a powerful poison that keeps us from abiding in life and peace and from receiving that heart that does not doubt.

There is a terrifying story in **Matthew** that lays out this issue of how unforgiveness impacts us in our **now** and binds us to death and not life. And keep in mind, we are still attempting to

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understand the **TRIPLE CATCH**—how we can get God to give us a heart that does not doubt.

Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. "For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. "When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. "But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. "So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.' "And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. "But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.' "So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.' "But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. "So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. "Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 'Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?' "And his lord, moved with anger, **handed him over to the torturers** {or *tormentors*} until he should repay all that was owed him. "**My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.**"

We should all be familiar with this story, but I would venture to say that most of us have practically ignored the last two sentences or taken them as a colorful metaphor. However, I believe Jesus meant them to be understood literally.

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First, the statement that "**My heavenly Father will also do the same to you**" is rendered in the *indicative* mood, so it is to be understood as a statement of fact. He will hand us over to the torturers, or literally in the Greek, the tormentors.

Second, "forgive" is in the *aorist* tense and not the *present* tense. In other words, Jesus upped the ante: we are to live in a state of forgiveness with others. It may start in our **now**, but the Father's idea is that this becomes **our state of being**, an overall reality of our lives.

Third, we cannot qualify this by saying we only have to forgive our "**brothers**" from the heart, giving us room to hold resentment towards our "sisters" or unbelievers who have hurt us, since He previously said that we are to forgive "**anyone**" against whom we hold a grudge.⁹ Moreover, in the parable of the "Good Samaritan"¹⁰ Jesus made it clear that His idea of "brothers" (or neighbors) extend even to our sworn enemies; as such, we are commanded to love our enemies (with God's *agape* love).¹¹

When Jesus taught us to pray, He said we are to pray, "And forgive us our debts, as we have also forgiven our debtors."¹² Here again, the *aorist* tense is used, but it is in the *indicative*, meaning that it is a done deal, a statement of fact. Hence, we are free to ask God to forgive us because "forgiveness" has become our state of being when it comes to relationships with others.

Fourth, and just to put emphasis on the fact that this is not to be taken proverbially, Jesus adds:

Matthew 6:14-15

For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father **will not** forgive your transgressions."

⁹ **Mark 11:25**

¹⁰ **Luke 10:29-37**

¹¹ **Matthew 5:44**

¹² **Matthew 6:12**

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And what is strange is that in each of these instances, we are the first mover, we must first forgive so that we will be forgiven, so we will be released, and not experience the practical *death* associated with the deeds of the *flesh*, which decay our heart, our mind, our soul, and our strength.

Fifth, Jesus was clear that if we forgive anyone their sins they are forgiven, but if we retain the sins of anyone they are retained.¹³ Once again, Jesus made a point about forgiveness needing to be our state of being as “forgive” is rendered in the *aorist* tense, whereas “retain” is in the *present* tense.

Therefore, if we now hold on to the offense, it is absolutely held deep in our soul (rendered in the *perfect passive indicative*). Being in the *passive*, this means that God will agree with our decision to not forgive, and instead of removing the offense in our heart (God forgiving us), it will be retained and begin its work of *death*. And being in the *indicative*, we can take this as a truth—a statement of fact.

However, if you forgive, because forgiveness describes how you live—your state of being—those sins are absolutely forgiven (*perfect passive indicative*) and freed from your heart, so you can *abide* in life and not death.

Forgive from the Heart

Forgiveness is very hard for most of us. However, depending upon the closeness of the relationship and the extent of the violation, or disappointment, as good Christians we tend to be able to muster up an “I forgive you,” knowing it is the right thing to do—a mental exercise in spiritual responsibility and duty. It’s kind of like the way we say “I’m sorry” to get past a conflict, but don’t really ever intend to change.

The Father’s demand, however, is that we **forgive from the heart**, from the depth of our emotional being, such that “forgiveness” becomes our mode of existence and even defines our relationships. And keep in mind, forgiveness is not subject to our getting the right apology from those who hurt us; in fact, I would venture to say forgiveness has nothing to do with the person

¹³ *John 20:23*

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or persons who have injured us; rather, it has everything to do with our relationship with the Father.

One more thing, do not be deceived, denying or ignoring the pain and trauma that has happened to you and acting as if it either did not happen or was no big deal is not the same as forgiveness. That is called denial and delusion. Every infraction or transgression we have experienced leaves a wound; hence, forgiveness from the heart requires not just an acknowledgment of the offense but a confrontation with the offense. More on this later.

The Tormentors

"Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 'Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?' And his lord, moved with anger, **handed him over to the torturers** {or *tormentors*} until he should repay all that was owed him. **"My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."**¹⁴

This is terrifying! The Father will do the same to us, hand us over to the tormentors, if we do not forgive from the heart. But who are the tormentors?

I believe Jesus is saying that Yahweh Sabaoth, the Lord of Heaven's Armies, will hand us over to the demonic spirits of wickedness who will bring torment into our lives and be an affliction in our heart, mind, soul, and strength. And given that many of us do not know what it means to forgive from the heart or how to forgive from the heart, I would suspect that many of us have unwittingly spent far too much time with the tormentors, even now.

Anguish, pain, resentment, bitterness, unrest, disturbed sleep, obsessive thoughts, all manner of self-protection, avoidance, judgment, condemnation, hurtful sarcasm, shortness in tone and conversation, snarky attitudes, impatience, voices in our head that we cannot shake, imaginary conversations and confrontations, anger, vengeance (actual or imagined), disgust, and hatred, are all signs that we have spent far too much time with the tormentors.

¹⁴ **Matthew 18:32-34**

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Punishment

At first glance, this seems like it is a punishment for being bad, a punishment for our sins. However, God's perfect love does not involve punishment.¹⁵ So, we **MUST** set aside that notion that God is out to punish us, despite how it feels. Yes, I am familiar with the whole "if it walks like a duck" concept, but the difference between punishment and anything else, for instance instruction, has everything to do with motivation. I believe God when He says His motivation for handing us to the tormentors has nothing to do with punishment because He does all things motivated by His perfect love, as God is love.¹⁶ Therefore, handing us over to the tormentors has everything to do with our gaining our freedom in all our relationships and in the depth of our soul, living under the glory of His forgiveness.

With that, we will pick up with the next episode where we will learn more about these tormentors, we will dive into understanding how the spiritual realm operates here in our physical realm, and what it is the Father is trying to accomplish in our lives by handing us over to the tormentors.

¹⁵ **1 John 4:15-21**

¹⁶ **1 John 4:8, 16**