

Overlooking Offenses

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Date: 19 August 2018

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[0 : 0 0] But I'd like to bring a word from Proverbs 19.11 to you. Proverbs 19.11, if you could please turn there. It says, A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, and it's his glory to overlook a transgression.

Let's pray together. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word, that it is a light for our path and a lamp for our feet. And we pray that you would give us eyes to see.

Come Holy Spirit, this day we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. In her biography of Abraham Lincoln, Doris Kearns Goodwin gives an interesting story from the mid-1850s when Lincoln was in the middle of his career in law.

And it shed some real light on Lincoln's ability to overlook major personal offenses. You see, an important patent case was coming to Chicago, and George Harding, a patent specialist for a distinguished law firm in Philadelphia, employed Lincoln for the case.

And after receiving an initial sum of money from the firm, Lincoln got to work on the legal arguments of the case, and shortly after, the case was transferred to Cincinnati.

[1 : 2 2] And so the law firm desired to use a man named Edward Stanton instead, but they never told Lincoln of the change. So for months, Lincoln continued working on the case, and in late September, he set out for Cincinnati with his legal brief in hand.

And Kearns Goodwin describes his encounter with Stanton and Harding this way. She says, Now this was a snubbing.

And the snubbing went far beyond the initial insult, as Kearns Goodwin continues, In the days that followed, Stanton managed to make it plain to Lincoln that he was expected to remove himself from the case.

And Lincoln did withdraw, though he remained in Cincinnati to hear the arguments. Harding never even opened Lincoln's manuscript, so sure he was that it would only be trash.

And throughout that week, though Lincoln ate at the same hotel, Harding and Stanton never asked him to join them for a meal or accompany them to or from the court.

[2 : 5 8] And when Judge John McLean hosted a dinner for the lawyers on both sides, Lincoln was not invited. And it's no wonder that Lincoln took the humiliating circumstances personally, And upon leaving Ohio, he wrote this to a friend.

Quote, In reply to your request for me to come again, I must say to you that I never expect to be in Cincinnati again. I have nothing against the city, But things have so happened here as to make it undesirable for me to ever return to this place.

Now, Trevin Wax adds then to this historical account. Fast forward six years later, The next time Lincoln and Stanton shook hands, Lincoln was president of the United States.

But instead of holding this resentment against Stanton, this humiliation, Lincoln recognized Stanton's gifts and talents, And he chose to overlook the offense.

Isn't that the passage we're working on? It's a man's glory to overlook an offense. Lincoln chose to overlook the offense and made one of the best choices possible for his cabinet.

[4 : 17] And over the years, Stanton and Lincoln proved to be an excellent team. They grew to love each other as dear friends. And it was Stanton who stood beside Lincoln's bedside at his death and out of the famous words, Now he belongs to the ages.

So Lincoln had been offended brutally. He had been humiliated. And the reality is Lincoln is not alone. Right? Isn't it true that we all find ourselves offended frequently and even constantly?

I admit, I don't know what's going on in the Bremen church. I don't know what kind of intersectional offenses may be here. But they're here because we are sinners relating to one another.

Now how are we to respond when we're offended? Sure, there are times for escalating the matter to direct confrontation. Matthew 18 says, If your brother sins against you and he doesn't repent, then get someone else.

And then escalated it could go to the church, two or three witnesses and beyond. But you know, that procedure is really quite rare regarding its being employed.

[5 : 30] Overwhelmingly, the godly course of action is this passage here. Proverbs 19, 11. A man's discretion makes him slow to anger.

And it says, Glory to overlook a transgression. That's what we want to focus on with the time we have together. And I want to unpack it with six main heads here, if we have time.

Come on first with me to overlooking a transgression. That's our first head. Overlooking a transgression. It says it's a man's glory to overlook a transgression.

You think of Exodus 33 and 34. Moses asks to see the Lord's glory. And the Lord says, You can't see my glory and live.

The Lord's consuming holiness would burn out the life of Moses should he come into its presence.

[6 : 32] So Moses has to be hid in the cleft of the rock. And the Lord's glory, his holiness, passes by. Ah, there's the word, passes by. Moses. It's the Hebrew word *avar*.

To pass by or pass over. It's a man's glory to pass over an offense. So the Lord passes by. It doesn't consume Moses, as would be his dessert as a sinner coming into the presence of a three times holy God.

It's like the angel of death when he came to those bloodstained doorposts. Instead of visiting the wrath of God on, the Lord passed by. Passed over the house.

No visit of the sword of justice. Thrust through the firstborn of that house because of the sinfulness. The Lord disregarded the sin. In the case of Moses.

And the firstborn in the house in Egypt. It was overlooked. God passed by, left unharmed. It's a man's glory to overlook, to pass over an offense.

[7 : 37] That's what this proverb is saying. My wife and I were watching a British drama from the late 1700s. And a man had become humiliated by a scoff, by an insult.

And so he challenged his foe to a duel. And his wife cautioned him, My dear, he says, after having been cautioned by his wife, you shouldn't have a duel with this man.

And he responded this way, My dear, how could I appear in public again? I've been offended. My public stature is at stake. My community splendor and glory is the issue.

I need the duel to retrieve my glory. Well, in the duel, the man was shot in the shoulder and he was actually shamed. And if he had won, frankly, he should have been shamed as well, because he would have been shown to be an individual who hadn't been slow to anger.

You see, for the man in that situation, having been offended, to really display public and community glory and splendor, and to display a grand stature would have been, having been assaulted for him simply to walk away, to pass by the offense, the wrong.

[8 : 58] That's the most handsome of behaviors, isn't it? Isn't Lincoln handsome? He may have appeared physically like an ape, I suppose. But when you read of him, wasn't he a dignified, glorious, handsome man for the way he dealt with Stanton and that deep offense?

Kidner says this regarding it's a man's glory to overlook an offense. Glory means beauty, suggesting adornment, and so brings out the glowing colors of virtue, which in practice may look drably unassertive, but God declares his almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity.

Isn't that what happened when Moses was hiding in the cleft of the rock? God's glory was being displayed. Here it is, the Lord, the Lord, the gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger, abounding in loving kindness.

As God's splendor is being displayed, it is his holding back, his anger, that is highlighted in its attributes. You see, foolish men, in the case of the duel, or in the case of even Lincoln's treatment of Stanton, foolish men might think that it is sheepish to be meek, and that's not very glorious.

But you think of when God became man. Did he not come as a sheep? Did he not come as a lamb, as a sheep, it says in Isaiah 53, before the shearers he did not open his mouth?

[10 : 33] Is not the Lord Jesus beautiful in the holy God coming among men and not acting as a lion and tearing us apart as we deserve, but acting as a humble sheep.

That's a man's glory to overlook an offense. Lawson says this, it's our duty and wisdom to pass by not only slight offenses, but injuries of a deeper die, such as are called transgressions.

And it's interesting, that word transgression in Proverbs 19, 11, it's a man's glory to overlook a transgression. It's the same word used in Isaiah 50, and verse 20, where it speaks of Joseph's brothers, it says when Jacob died and the concern was that their transgressions would be remembered again by Joseph, and now he would tear them to shreds.

Joseph forgave them the transgression. That's a big deal when you take 13 years of the best life of your brother and put him into prison and throw him into a pit and sell him off to Israelites down to Egypt.

That's a big deal, isn't it? But even those transgressions should be passed over. It's not just little insults that people give. That's what the text says.

[11 : 46] It's our glory to overlook a transgression. So we've seen then, overlooking a transgression, what that means. Secondly, consider having seen overlooking a transgression, recognizing hypersensitivity.

Recognizing hypersensitivity. We live, brothers and sisters, don't we, in an eggshell age where there's an overdosing on sensitivity training.

We find that up in Michigan anyway. Is that the way it is in Indiana too? I'm sure the University of Indiana has tentacles that spread throughout. We can view mere harmless comments as microaggressions.

We live in a climate where we can be conditioned to overindulge ourselves with the expectation that the world must treat us with kid gloves.

Ever, my daughter-in-law, we were off at a cottage recently and she had a finger that was infected. And we would always say, give Sarah a wide berth because if you bump into Sarah's finger, she's going to howl.

[13 : 05] And that's the way some of us can be at times. Hyper sensitive. Someone said something. Someone gestured something toward us. Well, practically speaking, this is the way it can work.

There's a woman named Becky Sweat. She wrote a little article. It's called Easily Offended and How to Get Over It. She confesses herself to be like a sore-fingered lady. She says, I can't believe as she was there at her kitchen and a friend had come over and the friend was snooping around in her kitchen.

Ladies, I don't know if that's an issue with you all. If John came to my study, you snooped around my study and you wondered what I'm reading. Okay, maybe I'd have the same feeling. But the woman in her kitchen said this to Becky Sweat.

I can't believe you let your kids eat toaster pastries as she's staring in the cabinet. They're all sugar and they're all trans fats. She was over for coffee and couldn't help peering into my pantry and seeing my box of toaster pastries.

And I could feel right then my hackles starting to rise. Is it right, ladies? Could that happen? Or how about you're not invited to a party that everybody else you know is going to.

[14 : 27] You offend a little bit now. Or your boss commends your co-worker in the company meeting but not you. Or you don't receive a thank you card for that gift that you so carefully selected.

Or your son sits out of the game on the bench the whole game while the coach's son and his circle of friends' sons play the whole time.

You relate to that? There was a time in my life when that just so offended me. And we can be so difficult. It can be difficult to overlook these elbows in our lives because we say I feel hurt upset insulted snubbed slighted wronged ignored mistreated these offenses up in Michigan anywhere are ubiquitous.

In Indiana could it be? They're all over the place. And you know what? It's possible in such circumstances that you do have just cause to be offended.

But it is wrong to expect the prosecution of every offense offense. And it's also wrong to expect the elimination of every offense.

[15 : 48] Sometimes as pastors we think okay in our congregation we want to create an atmosphere where there are no offenses that take place. Where no one is vexed by the treatment of another.

But you know what? We as pastors cannot create such an environment. As university presidents we can't create such a campus. Because offenses will be all over. It's like in June up in Michigan there are pollen.

You ever see those pollen microscopic spike balls? You can see what a piece of pollen looks like under the microscope. It's a spike ball.

And the idea of all these spike balls coming into my nose. And we can say I want to eliminate the environment and make it hypersanitary so that I do not have to sneeze or I don't have to have a runny nose.

But the reality is we cannot create an environment where there are no spike balls, where there are no offenses in church life or in community life. It's not a matter of treating the whole world. We need to treat ourselves.

[16 : 51] For me, maybe taking a little antihistamine can help me deal with the ubiquitous spike balls of pollen all around me. And likewise, I think this passage is a spiritual antihistamine that enables us to treat ourselves to deal with the inevitable offenses that are going to affect us.

And vex us and make us struggle. A man's transgression makes him slow to anger. A woman's as well. And it's her glory to overlook an offense.

That's the medicine for our souls. We need to change our mindset. We can't be so easily offended. it says in Ecclesiastes 7, 21 and 22.

Don't take seriously all the words spoken that you'll not hear your servant cursing you because that happens.

For you realize that you have many times cursed others. Isn't that true? Don't be so sensitive about what people might say to you, how they might gesture toward you because you have spoken, I have gestured in ways that have been offensive to others.

[18 : 05] And don't you appreciate it when others are kind and gracious to you when they overlook your transgressions? Isn't that a, just last night I had an evening meal with John Grievous.

You know who John Grievous is? He was here recently, I understand. We were talking about race relations. We were discussing the issues of how I'm a white guy and you're a black guy and how is it that we can offend?

And there are times when there can be a hypersensitivity on that issue. But John is just so gracious and he says, you know brother, I can't give John an accent. He says, but you know brother, when I think of where I was in the 1950s and Jim Crow lost in Southern Kentucky and I think the way it is right now, you men are so gracious to us.

And even though we can realize as people in white communities, we may have an insensitivity, John has the ultimate of spiritual antihistamine, overlooking all kinds of offenses.

What a beautiful thing that is. And when others treat us that way, doing unto them as we would have them do unto us, and ultimately looking to the Lord Jesus, as it says in Ephesians 4, 32, be kind to one another, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ has forgiven you.

[19 : 28] So, we've seen overlooking a transgression. We've seen recognizing hypersensitivity. Consider thirdly now, living in technicolor. Living in technicolor.

It says we are to overlook transgressions. What does that look like? What does that appear to be? What are some colorful ways of expressing this idea of forgiving offenses?

Well, really it's a multicolor display of love. 1 Corinthians 13. I'm going to a wedding tonight off in Detroit. Diane's nephew, my wife's nephew, being my nephew as well, being married.

And probably 1 Corinthians 13 will be read there how we're to love one another. We're to have love as patient.

love is kind. And so we think of this overlooking offenses in the context of marriage. Even my wife and I, a while back, she had prepared a nice meal for me.

[20 : 35] We were going to sit down and yes, we were going to watch a British drama on a Saturday evening. And she had prepared this wonderful meal, but she was preparing something and she was standing up and I couldn't see the television for, it must have been a good 45, 50, maybe 55 seconds.

And I was irritated while she was sick. Really, she prepared a glorious meal for me and I was a little offended by she wasn't considering my direct line to the tube there.

Well, marriage is filled with these offenses. But just consider, love, it says, is patient. It comes from the Old Testament, long suffering.

Long suffering refers to God, really it means to be long suffering, to have a long nose. God is a long nose. There's the fire of his consuming holiness, but because he has such a long nose, it never rages out in fire and consumes because he is patient.

He's long nosed. His wrath doesn't flare out. Jonathan Edwards says this, God, his patience is wonderfully displayed in bearing innumerable injuries from men that are grand and long continued.

[21 : 54] And so the next time your wife offends you for standing in front of the television or your husband offends you for not picking up whatever it is he doesn't pick up, just think of God long sufferingly dealing with you.

Love is patient. Love is not jealous. Young people may be here. We can be resentful when a sibling or a co-worker or a teammate is favored over us and we can be angry with that individual.

Love is not jealous, it says in 1 Corinthians 13. Love seeks not its own. It's willing to give up that limelight position to sit on the bench when somebody else I got a better arm and a glove and a bat than that guy.

I should be getting innings instead of him. But to be able to sit quietly, love does not seek its own, takes more grace than I can tell, to play the second fiddle well.

And I'm sure there are individuals in these green pews here who think I ought to be playing first fiddle in this area of life and God's got me playing second or third. Overlook transgression.

[23 : 15] Love. Love. 1 Corinthians 13. Love is not provoked. It's not irritable. It's not upsetable. We had this dog back up in Michigan.

It's a golden retriever dog named Copper. It had 12, it actually had 14 pups once. And when one dog has 14 pups, there is a problem.

It could be summarized this way, not enough teats. That's the problem. And the pups, they fight to get there, to get their milk, and I would just watch Copper lay there.

And sometimes the pups would smack her nose, even scratch her nose. But she was so patient. She was willing to overlook it. And isn't it true in the Church in Bremen Grace Fellowship?

Don't our nose get bent and scratched by one another. We've got to love one another in circumstances like this, even better than a dog loves her pups. Brothers and sisters in Christ, with the example of the Lord Jesus, loving one another, overlooking offenses.

[24 : 22] I don't know what's going on here in Bremen, but if the things are going on in Bremen that go on up in Michigan, this is a relevant thing.

It also says, the whole theme of doesn't take into account a wrong suffered in 1 Corinthians 13. That's what love is. Doesn't take into account a wrong suffered.

Plummer comments, when there's no question in mind that you've received an injury, love doesn't register the evil. It doesn't store up the resentment. It doesn't bear the malice.

It doesn't keep score. We have a member of our family, our extended family up in Michigan, and this individual, she can be around certain controversies and I find she might be misused in some way, but the wonderful thing about her is she just doesn't keep score.

She just keeps loving. In fact, I'm going to a wedding. Isn't a wedding a circumstance where there are swarming offenses that can take place?

[25 : 27] Well, this girl chose this dress and it didn't really match with the bride's dress and decorated the whole wedding and I'm going to a wedding and I wonder what kinds of things I'm going to face this evening with an extended family but love does not take into account a wrong suffering.

Love bears all things. Bears all things. If you're out hiking with a group of young people and you've been carrying the eight and a half pound water jug and nobody's offered to carry it and love bears.

It just bears all things. Believes all things meaning it puts the best construction on something. Something happens. Aren't we prone to put the worst construction on it?

Come on put the best construction on it. Love hopes all things. Barnabas took the deserter John Mark back again took him off to Cyprus and Paul who said no John Mark is for the junk pile.

Eventually Paul acknowledged that John Mark is profitable. Barnabas hoped all things regarding him. So love one another here in technicolor in keeping that principle of love overlooking a transgression.

[26 : 50] But fourthly, come on, fourthly, cutting others slack. A man's transgression makes him slow to anger. It's his glory to overlook a transgression.

We should cut others slack to apply this proverb. Cut slack because sometimes a felt offense is a misinterpretation.

An advertising agency copywriter was told to make French pastries and she brought them into work.

And her boss took one bite of the pastry and he raved, you're in the wrong field. You should be working in a bakery. This is the best dessert I've ever tasted. Well, misinterpretation was, even though she was thankful for the compliment, she was furious inside.

She says, I fumed. I thought to myself, six years of college, a master's degree, awards in advertising and my boss tells me that I should be baking for a living instead of working for the firm. Come on.

[27 : 58] But sometimes we're like that, aren't we? Really, that's the spin you took on that? Take a better spin. He liked the pastry. Or, sometimes what seems to be a major offense is simply a reflection of a different personality or upbringing or cultural background or lifestyle.

There's a foreigner who moved to the U.S. And his new friends just thought, he's too blunt. He's just a machete of a personality.

But it wasn't until this man's family visited the U.S. that the American family or the American friends understood that the in-your-face personality was a cultural issue.

And when he saw this family, big fat Greek wedding thing, they just expressed love in different ways than they were familiar with. So I even think of myself as an American in my own culture if I am in Zambia.

How do I come across among Zambians or in South Africa and even different cultures in Indiana and different people? May God help us to have grace.

[29 : 19] Or, this cutting other slack, sometimes an offense grows out of unknown circumstances. Think of Abraham Lincoln and Stanton.

Lincoln, when he reflected on what happened to him in Cincinnati, he really got a raw deal there. They treated him very poorly. But Lincoln, who eventually appointed Stanton as the Secretary of War, Lincoln bore and believed and hoped and endured all things.

Stanton's insulting behavior, he realized upon analysis in Cincinnati there, didn't take place in a vacuum. Lincoln had investigated eventually, and he learned the rest of the story.

And the rest of the story regarding Stanton was, in the years before he met Lincoln, Stanton's daughter Lucy died of scarlet fever. And then the love of Stanton's life, his wife, died at age 29.

And broken hearted, Stanton buried his wife in her wedding dress and for months roamed his house sobbing and calling her name. And not long after, Stanton's younger brother developed a high fever impairing his brain, leading to an ugly suicide in front of his children.

[30 : 41] And then professionally, the patent case in Cincinnati was the biggest of Stanton's career. And then when Harding got sick in Cincinnati, Stanton stayed up all night to prepare.

So Lincoln, again, Lincoln cutting slack to Stanton, and instead of blackballing him, appointing him as a secretary of war, Lincoln thought, you know, years of sadness and illness and tragedy and a couple of sleepless nights contributed to Stanton's bad treatment to me in those days in Cincinnati.

And so Lincoln cut Stanton's slack. And we ought to consider one another, always, and cut one another slack. It's our glory.

It's God-like, isn't it, to overlook a transgression. So we've seen overlooking a transgression and recognizing hypersensitivity, loving and technicolor, cutting other slack.

Now, fifthly, forgiving unilaterally, forgiving unilaterally. By that I mean forgiving without the offender, confessing, or repenting.

[31 : 46] Maybe some will sit up and say, what? Forgive someone without the repentant? Isn't it John? Luke 17, 3, say, that if your brother repents, then forgive him.

Yes, the text does say that. But that's not the whole Bible. Proverbs 19, 11, needs to be factored into this, and so many other texts that we can bring into bear.

You realize that the use of Luke 17, 3, which says, if your brother repents, then forgive him. you realize that this passage can be used as a self-serving club that can seek to beat others into submission?

That I will not have a relationship with them unless they come into full agreement with me? There are occasions when, say, Matthew 18 or Luke 17, they must repent in order to be forgiven.

If a man is involved in an adulterous affair, he needs to repent of it before he's forgiven. A black and white issue. If a man is engaged in embezzlement financially against a partner, surely there must be repentance.

[32 : 57] But so oftentimes in the spats and in the conflicts we have with one another, it's not a black and white issue at all. Oftentimes it's a difference of opinion on a disputable matter.

For instance, there's a husband and a wife. Their five-year-old daughter was ill, and the husband related to the daughter in a way, said something to the daughter, and the wife claimed that the husband sinned against the daughter in the way they spoke to the daughter.

The wife was convinced the husband had sinned. The husband believed he didn't sin, and they were in opposition with one another. You know what they did? They lived in separate rooms, bedrooms, for 30 years, and didn't speak with one another for three decades.

And the contention was, unless you repent, I will not forgive. Really? Really? The text was used as a self-serving club, not to bring about godliness.

You may say, oh, but God never forgives without repentance. Really? You believe that God never forgives you? Unless you repent?

[34 : 10] Yes, he does continuously. Due to our ignorance, he forgives us constantly. It says in Psalm 130 in verse 3, oh, Lord, if you would mark iniquities, who could stand?

But there is forgiveness with you. Our iniquities. How many times have you confessed to God your sin? What's about 10, 10, 0, 10, 08 right now?

How many sins have you confessed to God today? How many sins have you committed to God? Far beyond, more numerous than the hairs of our heads are our sins and thought and word and deed, but bless God, he forgives us.

Colossians 3, 13 says, bearing with one another, forgiving each other. Whoever has a complaint against anyone, just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you forgive.

So I should have real leverage with you now and I bring the Lord Jesus into the picture. Christ Jesus has forgiven you and he has forgiven you a fortune. Matthew 18, how dare we take the posture of that servant who's forgiven the fortune of a debt and then he throttles his fellow servant throwing him into prison and bearing a grudge against him when it's only a day's wages.

[35 : 34] that's the issue. Carol Albanese writes this she said I once had a roommate in college and she made life miserable.

Her behavior and speech made me feel she hated the world in me. My stomach was in knots all the time I'd go to the gym just to get out of the apartment so much tension there was. I burned a ton of calories but if I was honest I knew I was handling things poorly.

I gave into the avoidance pattern and I was also developing a lot of bitterness toward her and when our lease was up it was time for us to move out I was so excited I'd never have to live with her again.

I even took a picture of her empty room. A few years passed I rarely thought about her except so thankful to be free from her but then in prayer God began to bring my old roommate to mind and I knew something was displeasing and I thought but she she is the one who needs the forgiveness and after months of resisting I finally wrote and asked her forgiveness for the way that I have sinned against her and to my surprise she quickly responded with grace and ended up saying that she should be the one asking for the forgiveness and months later she asked if we could talk she needed counsel and while going through a tough situation and after I hung up the phone I thought wow that's the power of reconciliation before pursuing peace with her I'd not have been able even to look her in the eye if I'd run into her somewhere but after the peacemaking a weight was taken off my shoulders and doors for ministry opened up does the Holy Spirit bring anyone to your mind in your life

I don't know what's going on in Bremen Indiana but the Lord does may the Spirit of God work may he bring peace and just the last six point is letting go of grudges just letting go of grudges often times people refuse to talk with individuals they should talk people in the church people at the shop people in extended family just cool and distant grudges are easier to hold than forgiveness is to hand out but I tell you what grudges can be so toxic a life at peace gives heart to the body but envy rots the bones just close with this Robert E.

[38 : 02] Lee after the Civil War he visited a woman in Kentucky where John Grievous is from and the woman brought Lee out to her front yard and she showed the woman the shattered grand old oak tree in front of her house and she was so bitter because it had been shelled by federal cannon fire and she hoped that Lee who was the general of the south would just curse the north in her front yard but Lee was just silent didn't say a word for about a minute then he said cut it down ma'am just cut it down and forget it is there any tree in your life in my life that we should just cut it down and bury it and display the Christ-like behavior of this proverb a man's discretion makes him slow to anger a woman's as well that's her glory it's his glory to overlook an offense may the

Lord Jesus help us to be conformed to his image let's pray together our heavenly father we thank you for your word we thank you for the way it helps us in Holland and it helps us in Bremen and may we glorify you may the spirit do his work in us we pray in Jesus name amen