

Stuck on Jackass Hill (Blaspheming the Spirit)

Matthew 18:14-35

#23 in our series "Stories Jesus Told"

Peter Hiett

February 28, 2016

Prayer

Jesus, we ask that you would help us to preach the Gospel and that you would set us free. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Message

Matthew chapter 18 begins with the disciples arguing over who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Then in verses 15-16 Jesus says:

If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

One hot August night in 1978, after a day of jeeping with my church youth group, I floored the accelerator on my parents' orange VW bus and raced twenty miles an hour to the top of Jackass Hill on Jackass Hill Road in Littleton.

I slammed on the brakes, turned to my girlfriend (Susan Coleman) and said, "I am so damned mad at you!" Then I told her why. I confronted her with her fault, like Matthew 18 stipulates. But instead of repenting of her obvious sins, she yelled back at me, "Well, I'm so damned mad at you."

Well, the two of us sat on Jackass Hill for hours crying and yelling as we unwrapped the sins of the day. The nearest we could tell, it started when I'd jumped out of the jeep, in which we'd both been traveling, to go goof off with some friends. Feeling insulted, she then switched vehicles and was riding in another vehicle—a truck.

Not knowing she was there in that truck, and now needing a ride, I ran and jumped into the back of that truck. About half way over the tailgate, the truck hit a bump and a couple thousand pounds of truck bounced up and hit me in a very sensitive spot. I rolled into the bed of the truck, trying to act cool on the outside, while on the inside, I walked through the "Valley of the Shadow of Death." Little did Susan know that the "fruit of her own womb" was hanging in the balance... she just thought I was ignoring her.

At the next stop, I jumped out of the truck to weep in the woods alone. I jumped out having not even noticed Susan. Next thing I knew, Susan is getting all friendly with Dave Weld—the Patrick Swayze of our youth group...long blonde hair, tan, washboard abs, and pensive. Well, I retaliated for that. Then she took vengeance in return. All day long every glance, every look, every gesture was a

weapon. Then even on Jackass Hill confronting each other, according to Matthew 18, it only seemed to get worse.

I suppose we could have each called two or three witnesses or hired a counselor, but no matter what, I think it had all been destined to turn into war. At times like that, it's awfully tempting to just give up, call it off, say it just didn't work. Or to give up by growing a shell around the heart to keep it safe from the pain of love. Like CS Lewis said, "The only place safe from the danger of love is hell."

So we sat on Jackass Hill, mighty tempted to Hell...or maybe even already bound up by Hell—to use the Biblical word, Hades. We were tempted to isolation, darkness and death—living death...We were tempted to quit. We almost quit. We often do quit, just when real love is about to happen because it hurts.

We almost quit: Jonathan, Elizabeth, Rebekah, Coleman, honeymoon vacations, walks along the beach, the best parts of me—my favorite windows into the heart of God almost didn't happen.

Why?

Was it just a bump in the road?

Was it a simple misunderstanding?

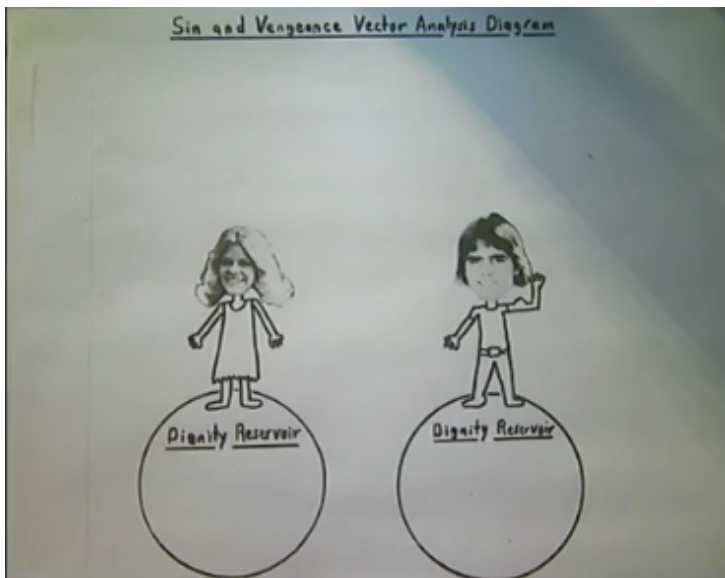
Why couldn't we get past it (excuse it and go on)?

Why was it so frustrating and so painful and so hard?

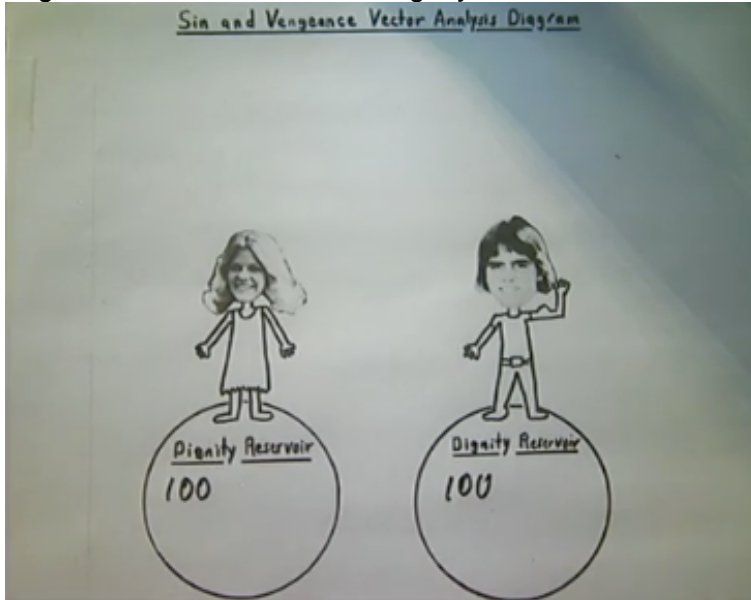
How do we understand the confusion?

Well, we understand it with a...

Sin and Vengeance Vectorial Analysis Diagram:



Each of us has a certain amount of dignity in our “dignity reservoir,” which is roughly equivalent to our resume, GPA, or what we consider to be our accomplishments. Our dignity reservoir contains the life that “we have made.” For the sake of argument, let’s assume that both Susan and I, that morning, began with 100 D.U.’s in our Dignity Reservoir that morning in 1978.



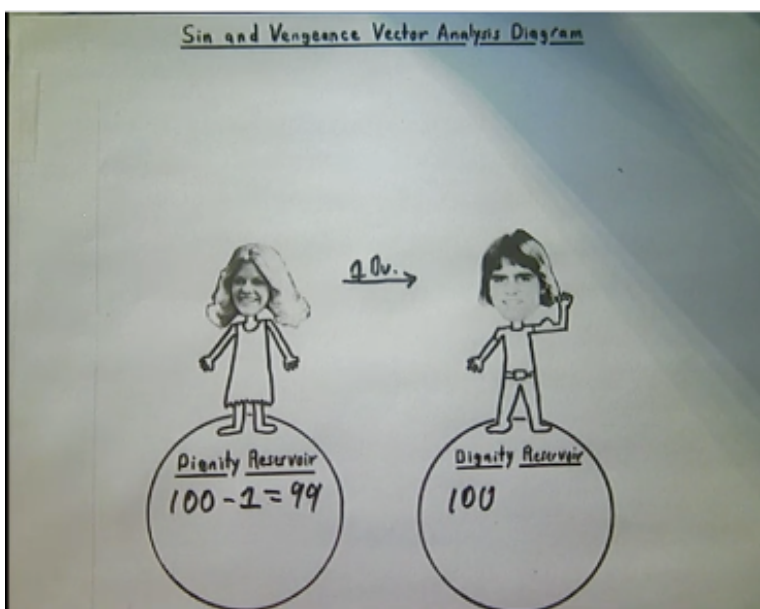
Every time you offend someone, or sin against someone, you rob them of some dignity.

So, here and analysis of the situation:

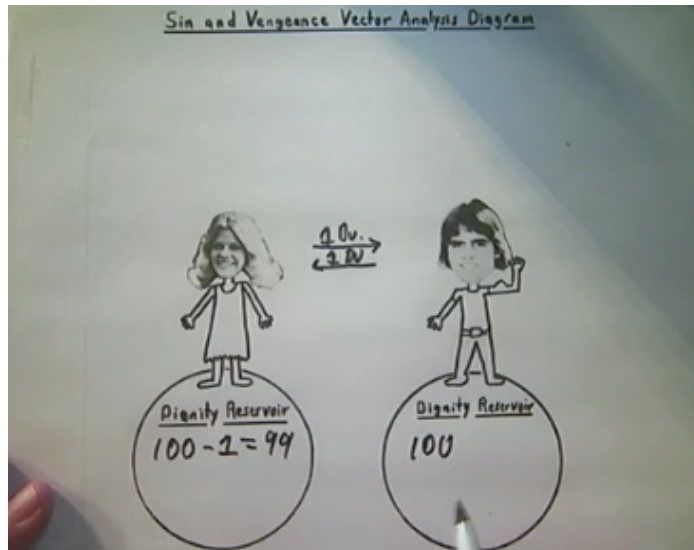
1. **So first, I hopped out of Susan’s Jeep. I was inconsiderate.**

That’s about a 1 Dignity Unit sin vector.

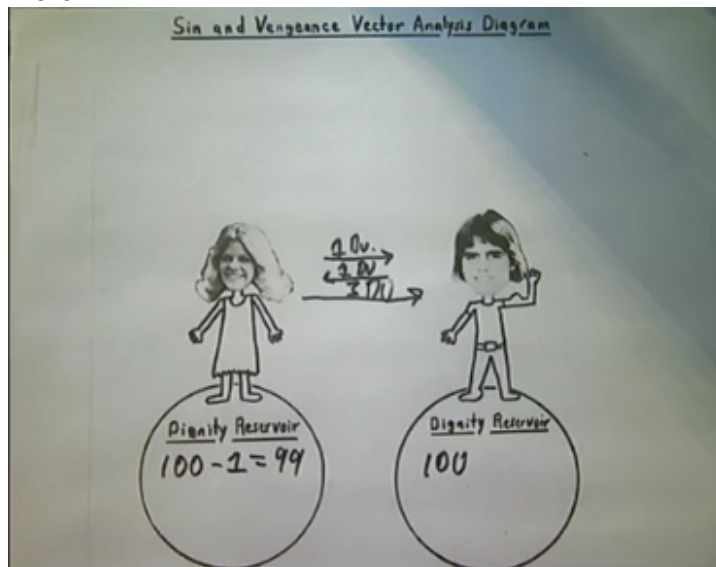
And that’s minus 1 in her Dignity Reservoir, decreasing her total Dignity Units from 100 down to 99.



2. **Second, she felt a little empty so she retaliated by switching vehicles.**
That's a 1 D.U. vengeance vector.
However, it's *not subtracted* from my dignity units because I didn't even know she did it.
Furthermore, she doesn't really get the 1 D.U. back because human vengeance never really satisfies.



3. **Third, I encountered the tailgate and ignored Susan.**
That's like 3 D.U.'s.
But in reality, I didn't know she was there: So it really *wasn't a sin* and therefore, could have been EXCUSED, but she didn't bother to check... cause she was feeling pretty low on Dignity Units and couldn't risk losing more.

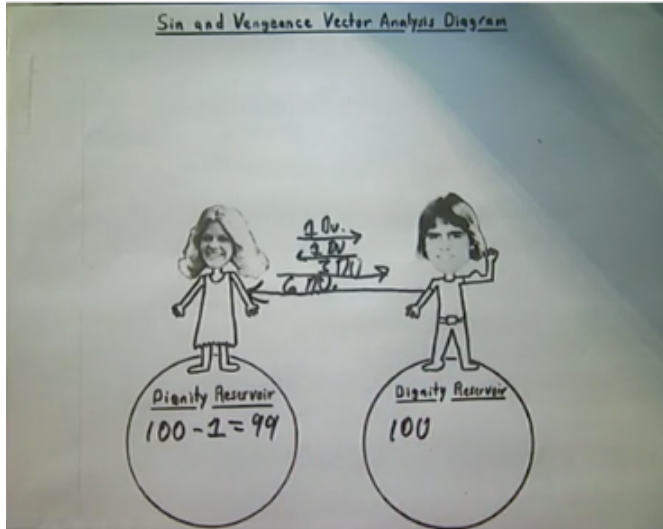


4. **So she retaliated looking for 6 D.U.'s.**

"6 D.U.'s?" you say, "How do you get 6 D.U.'s?"

Well, do the math:

the 4 D.U.'s I took
+ the 1 D.U. she tried to take, but I didn't know she took
+ interest for making her go through all that.
That's like 6 D.U.'s.



Where on earth is she going to find 6 D.U.'s?

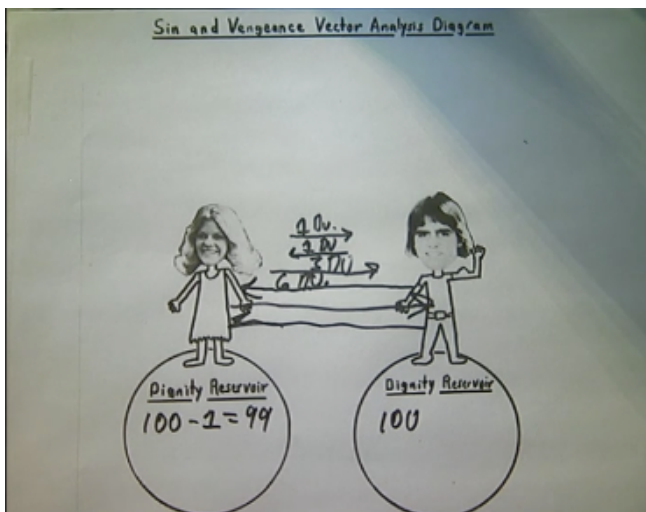
Well, the washboards in Dave Weld's abdominal region!

"6 D.U.'s? That's a lot." I'm thinking, "I'm good for maybe 2, but 6?"

That's a **D.U.I.** — a Dignity Unit Infraction!"

5. **Now I really retaliate.**

6. **She retaliates**—every glance, every gesture until you've got like this black out of sin and vengeance vectors. We were like two ticks and no dog. We were looking for blood, drawing blood and there wasn't enough blood. It just keeps growing, all day and then, even on Jackass Hill.



It was sin all over the place, especially when you consider the Lord says, *"Vengeance is mine,"* and Jesus tells us, *"Do not retaliate"—"Turn the other cheek."*

See? We were "damned mad," and it was "damned madness!" We were like two bags of radio active sin that had gotten too close to each other, reached critical mass and now—nothing could stop the detonation.

I'm saying, it was *NOT* a simple misunderstanding in which the dignity units could be restored with a little communication. It was *NOT* simply a misunderstanding; it was becoming a dreadful *understanding*. We were *NOT* arguing over a poorly timed bump in the road. We were arguing over who it was that was "greatest in the kingdom."

It's easy to excuse a *misunderstanding*, but this was becoming a dreadful *understanding* that each of us was a tangled mass of self-centered, egocentric, manipulations masked in a cloak of civility, and constrained by pride. We were blood suckers trying to fill our "dignity reservoirs" with the life of the other.

A bump in the road just brought it all out; a little offense detonated the bomb, and now our dignity reserves were just about down to zero. We each had about as much dignity as a prostitute, a tax collector or a Gentile.

Now back to our text. Next verse: 17

If he (the one who offended you) refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church (ekklesia: those called to gather), let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Well, what does that mean?

Jesus died for Gentiles and tax collectors!

Next verse: 18

"Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven,

Now, "heaven" doesn't always mean the Kingdom of Heaven." St. Paul writes that we battle "the world rulers of this present darkness in the heavenly places."

and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree (symphoneo: symphonize) on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered (synago: make a synagogue) in my name, there am I among them." 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?"

That is, “Lord, when can I quit? Lord, surely there must be limits to grace for if there weren’t, it would be the death of me!” Simon Peter is thinking, “Lord, I only have so much dignity to give.”

During World War II, Simon Wiesenthal was taken from a death camp to a make shift army hospital where a nurse led him to the bedside of a young Nazi soldier named Karl. Karl was twenty-two years old. His head was completely covered with puss stained bandages; He was dying.

The nurse left the room. Karl’s hands groped for Simon’s hands. He grabbed hold and told Simon that as a dying wish he’d asked the nurse to find a Jew that he could confess to. So for hours, Karl confessed to Simon in excruciating detail how his unit had driven 200 Jews into a house and set it on fire, how he shot and murdered father, mother, and child as they tried to escape.

He cried out, *“Oh, God, I’ll never forget it. It haunts me.”* When he finished, he said, *“I know what I’ve told you is terrible, but in these long nights, waiting for death, I’ve so longed to talk to a Jew and beg forgiveness from him. I didn’t know if there were any left. I know that what I am asking is almost too much for you, but without an answer, I cannot die in peace.”* Then there was a long, devastating silence until at last Simon made up his mind. He stood up and, without a word, turned and left the room.

- The debt was too much.
- Too much dignity had been taken and by not forgiving, he, at least, obtained a little vengeance.
- Yet the vengeance did not restore his dignity.
- He was haunted all his life by his decision—trapped, like a man in his own prison of resentment. He was bound.

In 1976 he published his book, *The Sunflower*, in which he tells the story and invites 32 scholars to debate whether or not what he did was right.

Simon Weisenthal asks, *“But who was to forgive him? I? Nobody had empowered me to do so.”*

That is, *“Who was I to speak on behalf of Heaven, to loose on behalf of Heaven? And, as for myself, how could I find the resources to forgive so much?”*

Simon Peter asks, *“Lord, how many times do I forgive? Seven?”*

The Jews knew, forgiveness is not cheap.
It costs—at least the blood of a spotless lamb.

Next verse, 22:

Jesus (the Jew) said to him, *"I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times. (or "seventy times seven" depending on how it's translated).*

Either way, it means you must forgive without limit.

Verses 23-35

"Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts (synarai logon. Literally: reckon the word) with his servants (doulon: slaves). When he began to settle (reckon), one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay (literally: "Not having of him to pay"), his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring (literally: worshipping) him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him (splachnizomai – "moved with compassion for him"), the master of that servant released him (literally: "loosed him") and forgave him (aphiemi - "allowed him, suffered him, let him") the debt. 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.' So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. 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. Then his master summoned him and said to him, '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 (basinistes: "tormentors"), 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."

Wow!

It's like un-forgiveness really is the unforgiveable sin: *"Deliver to the tormentors until he should pay all his debt!"* Un-forgiveness is blasphemy against the Spirit—the Spirit of Grace.

But that's confusing. Isn't it?

"Be merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful (Luke 6:36)," said Jesus. Did He mean, *"Be merciful **OR** your heavenly father **WON'T** be merciful?"*

Do we determine the character of God with our mistakes?

Is the Mercy of God dependent on us?

Can you be forgiven and then un-forgiven?

Can Jesus be Un-crucified by us

That's confusing and we'll circle back, but the story does explain why we find it so hard to forgive: It tells us that sin is a debt. Forgiveness is canceling the debt by absorbing the loss, and that hurts!

I hear people say, "*Well, that really hurt. I can't forgive that; that was inexcusable!*" If it were *excusable*, it wouldn't be *forgivable* because there would be nothing to forgive. We *excuse* mistakes, but we must *forgive* sins.

When I *excuse*, I say, "I thought you owed me one hundred denarii, but there was a misunderstanding. You're excused."

It's precisely when something becomes *inexcusable* that it becomes *forgivable*.

When I forgive, I say, "Oh, I understand you flirted with Dave Weld to break my heart. I understand, and I forgive you." "Oh, I understand, you do owe me one hundred denarii, but I forgive you."

That is, "I take your debt, and I turn it into a gift."

"I absorb the loss of one hundred denarii
by for-giving the one hundred denarii to you."

If an accuser accuses you of taking the one hundred denarii, you tell that accuser: "I for-gave you the one hundred denarii. You are not bound, but loosed—you're free."

So you see Simon Wiesenthal's problem: "If I forgive Karl, it takes more than I have, and I die." "To forgive Karl is the death of what I call me, myself, my life." And yet, what has Simon's life become? Simon's life is now defined by Karl's sin against Simon. Simon's life has become a prison in which he's *tormented* by bitterness, resentment and anger AND now even *more tormented* by Karl's request for Mercy. "To forgive Karl is the death of me," thought Simon.

Maybe forgiveness is *always* the "death of me," somehow in someway.
It's a sacrifice.

Well Jesus' story involved more than one slave and another slave, more than just Simon and Karl, or me and Susan. Jesus' story included the King, and the King forgives 10,000 talents.

Scholars argue over the exact value of a talent, but we know that the entire tax revenue of Judea, Samaria, and Idonia (an area roughly the size of Israel), the entire annual tax revenue given to the Roman Empire was six hundred talents.

One hundred denarii was one hundred coins, worth about one hundred days of labor. So it was a joke, but you could carry it in your pocket. Just to carry 10,000 talents would literally take an army. 10,000 talents is 710,000 pounds of gold. 10,000 talents is more than the annual revenue of the entire Roman Empire. And Jesus may have meant "tens

of thousands” of talents. It’s a number like seventy times seven. The listeners probably laughed out loud thinking, “How could a slave incur a debt of 10,000 talents?”

Great question!

10,000 Talents!!!! (710,000 lbs. of Gold)

- **Maybe the debt was an illusion?**

How could a slave incur a debt equal to the annual revenue of the Roman Empire?

I’ve wondered: Maybe the debt was an illusion in the mind of the slave. So at the end of the story, the slave is in a prison of his own making until he realizes there's no debt.

In Job 41:11 God says, “Who has given to me (prevented me or betrayed me) that I should repay him?” “Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine.”

In Romans 11, Paul quotes God, in Job, writing, “Who has first given-*perodidomai* (which can also be translated ‘betrayed’) to him that he might be repaid (or recognized)? For from him and through him, and to him are all things. To Him be the glory forever.” In other words, “Did you, oh man, really think that a created being could enter into some sort of business relationship with the Creator, and change the Creator's financial status?

So could the slave incur a debt like this? I don’t think so!

So is the debt an illusion? Well, no.

I say that because:

1. The King really forgives it.
2. Jesus, who is telling the story, says the slave really has it—this debt.

Gosh, the only way a slave could incur a debt worth 10,000 talents would be to take something from the King worth more than his entire kingdom, like the life of his son.

Maybe the slave really did incur the debt, for the slave took the life of the king's son.

10,000 Talents!!!! (710,000 lbs. of Gold)

- **Maybe the debt was an illusion?**

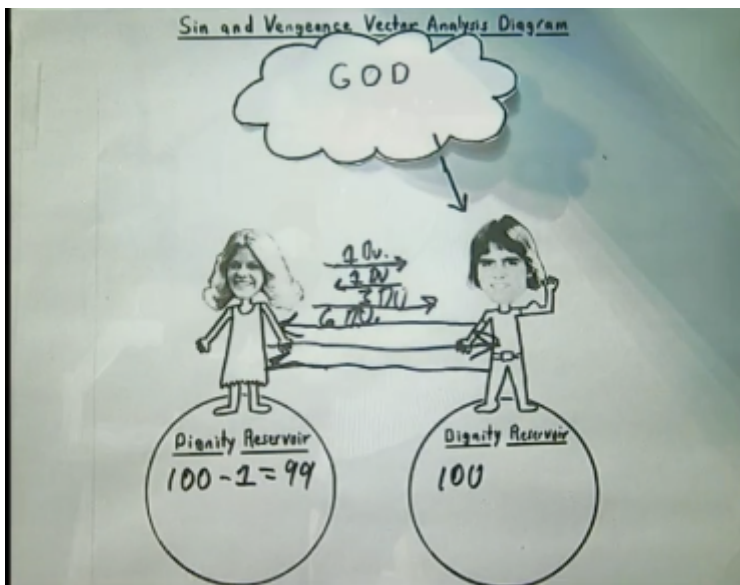
How could a slave incur a debt equal to the annual revenue of the Roman Empire?

- **Maybe the slave really did incur the debt?**

For the slave took the life of the King's son.

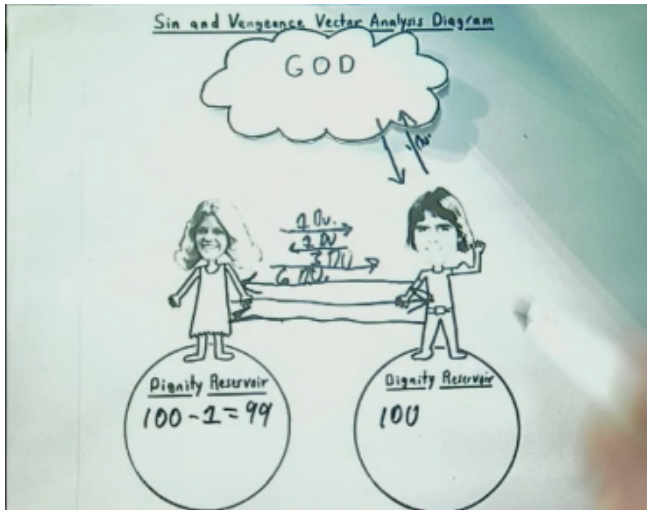
That does sound vaguely familiar. Maybe the listeners thought the idea absurd, but Jesus probably wasn't laughing. In nine chapters, some of these folks would actually take Jesus' life on a tree in a garden. In seven chapters, Jesus reveals the judgment saying, "Whatever you did to the least of these, you did to me." Do you see what that means?

[First, let's put God in the picture. (Peter puts a cloud with "God" written on it up)]



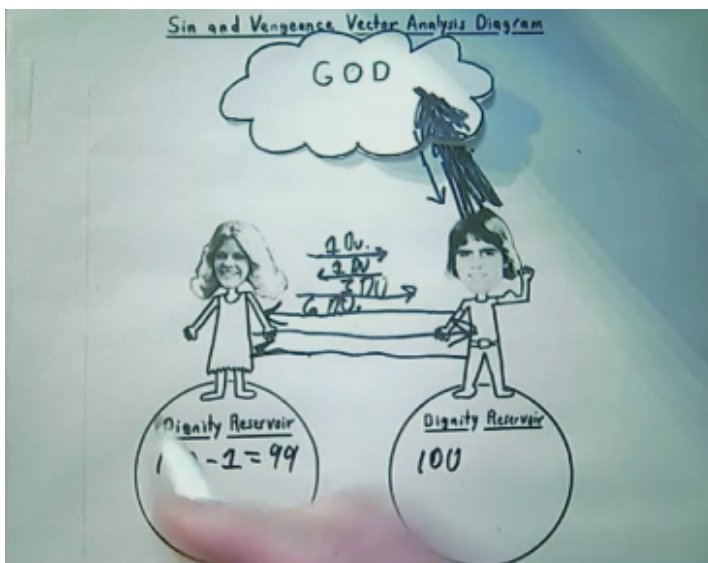
For every horizontal sin vector, there is a vertical component vector. If I take one dignity unit from Susan on a jeep trip, I take one dignity unit from the Son of the King on a jeep trip, and owe Him what?

One dignity unit on a jeep trip: *"The measure I give is the measure I get."*



Well, I hope you see the problem with that: It's hard to see how one dignity unit sin could incur a 10,000 talent debt and result in an endless debtor's prison, or endless conscious torment by fire. Even if, like Judas, Pilate or the Roman centurion, I actually physically murdered the King's son, it would seem the King's punishment would be to murder me (maybe with some torment on the way, as interest). So how could one finite sin (or any number of finite sins) result in infinite torment, in an endless prison? For, obviously the slave can't pay 10,000 talents— especially from prison. How does that make any sense?

In the 5th century AD, Augustine of Hippo (the first real Roman theologian, a remarkable man but unable to read New Testament Greek) argued that a “finite sin” against an “infinite creator” deserved “infinite punishment.” Therefore, we all incur endless conscious torment. So that seems like what I really deserve for the “finite sin” is infinite, humongous eternal punishment.



So, you're a turd to your girlfriend on a jeep trip, and God must get infinitely angry (which Augustine defined as justice). He must get infinitely angry and torment you infinitely. OR for you, He might kill His only begotten infinite Son and because Jesus is infinite, He satisfies God's justice, so you are saved, according to Augustine. But not all can be saved, according to Augustine, because then we couldn't explain endless torment in an endless debtor's prison, and God wouldn't be just.

Well, there are some things right with that but so many things really twisted with that. For one, it's not really true that a "finite" sin against an infinite creator deserves an infinite punishment. In fact, Isaiah and Job say just the opposite: "How arrogant of you to think you, a created being, could merit anything (good or bad) from God.

Or put it this way: If I stole twenty dollars from a seven-year-old kid, saving allowance for a bike, that would be a big sin, right? But if I stole twenty dollars from Donald Trump, it wouldn't. Donald Trump couldn't care less. And that is exactly Job's question for God: "Why do you care about me?" Why torment me at all?"

"What is man that thou art mindful of him?" "Why do you care one way or another?" "If I sin, what do I do to you O Lord?" asked Job (Job 7:17-20).

So, a finite sin wouldn't deserve infinite retaliation, and if it did, wouldn't that mean that God is infinitely unsatisfied and endlessly angry, and infinitely not at peace?

So the slave has a 10,000 talent debt, but it doesn't make sense that he incurred that 10,000 talent debt (he didn't make the debt). It doesn't make sense in this story Jesus tells or the story Jesus is about to live. Even when Judas, Pilate, and the Roman Centurion take Jesus' life, Jesus says, *"No one takes it from me. I freely lay it down."* And not only that, all of Scripture makes it abundantly clear: Not only does Jesus give it, The Father gives Jesus, and He arranged everything to do so, on a tree in a garden. He gives Jesus so we can see that we take Jesus. And think about this story that Jesus told: The story starts with debt. From the foundation of the story there is debt, and no indication that the King blames the slave for the debt. This King isn't even angry about this 10,000 talent debt. He only gets angry when the slave refuses to forgive the one hundred denarii debt of a brother.

And check this out: This stupid slave thinks he can repay a 10,000 talent debt, for he says, "Have patience, and I will repay it all." BUT He's a slave. What will he repay it with? Everything He thinks He owns already belongs to the Master. He has nothing to earn 10,000 talents with.

He has nothing to earn one hundred denarii with, for he himself belongs to the master. Even the slave that owes him one hundred denarii doesn't actually owe him, but rather his master.

If you know you are a slave of the master, no one can actually sin against you. They can only sin against your master. And technically, you can't win against another slave only against their master—that's how you reckon? So King David wrote, "Against you, and you alone, Lord have I sinned." So the slave reckons, he thinks, he can pay off the debt. But the King knows that he cannot pay off the debt. The King thinks the slave *is* the debt. The slave thinks he can pay what is owed. The King thinks the slave *is* what is owed.

Listen closely: "*And not having of him to pay, the Lord ordered him to be sold with his wife and children, and all he had (his life) and payment to be made (payment to be accomplished)*" (Matthew 18:25).

The slave doesn't have 10,000 talents. That king reckons that this slave is worth 10,000 talents. What's owed is worth the annual revenue of the Roman Empire. What if this slave is the son of the King? Or, if that doesn't work, what if the Son of the King is in the slave? Or what if this son of the king doesn't truly know he's a son of the King— he doesn't know that he contains the lifeblood of the King? So, when he gives his brother 10,000 denarii he demands it back, not knowing they're *both* sons of the King.

Jesus says that it is like when you don't forgive "your brother" from the heart—the heart that pumps the blood. And "the life is in the blood." Jesus seems to reckon that we are all children of one Father (He said pray, "*Our Father*") who share one Life, and He is "the Life." You know, whenever Scripture is hard to understand, I find it very helpful to take it literally (for lack of a better term).

Jesus said, "*I am the Life.*" And Paul wrote, "The spirit is life." And on the sixth day of creation, which is this day (for we are still being created), He "spirited"—He breathed His life into the clay and man became a living being—a soul—*nephesh* (in Hebrew)—a *psyche* (in Greek).

You contain the *nesheema*—"the breath of God." You contain the Life. And God gladly gave you that Life—His Life. And so you are worth far more than 10,000 talents. You contain God's own Life. But as soon as you think you create that life, save that life, or redeem that life, as soon as you say, "My life," and hang on to that life, you confess that you stole "the life." And who is "the life?" Jesus said, "*I am the Life.*" You have a *psyche*—an "earthen vessel"—your life (so to speak) *Psyche* is sometimes translated "life," but it means soul.

You have a *psyche*, but you contain the *zoe*—God’s life, and Jesus is the Life. We broke Jesus’ earthen vessel, and He gave His life—*THE Life* “*The life is in the blood.*” – “The spirit is in the blood” – “The breath is in the blood,” and it’s easily worth 10,000 talents.

So, as soon as you think “my life,” you take Jesus’ Life. But when did God our Father give The Life? “*The lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world.*” That’s the very start of the story. See what that means? That means that the cross is the revelation of a transaction that somehow upholds all space and time, and has always given you Life. But at the cross you come to know The Life as you watch your Father reckon the Word (the account) as you watch God forgive you 10,000 talents, as Jesus—the Word of God sacrifices His soul and delivers up The Spirit—the very Spirit with which you are BEING created.

Maybe the slave didn’t incur the debt (or earn the debt) because he didn’t create himself. The King created Him with His Word.

10,000 Talents!!!! (710,000 lbs. of Gold)

- **Maybe the debt was an illusion?**

How could a slave incur a debt equal to the annual revenue of the Roman Empire?

- **Maybe the slave really did incur the debt?**

For the slave took the life of the King’s son.

- **Maybe the slave didn’t incur the debt.**

For long before he took the life, the King gave “The Life.”

Maybe the slave didn’t create the debt because long before He could take the Life, the King had given the Life. But when the King “reckoned the Word...” (who is Life), on the cross in 33 AD, He revealed His account. The slave saw that the King had a right to His Life. So He offered to pay for His Life, and the King said, “I give you your Life! You are free!” That’s the reckoning—the eternal accounting.”

Understand: You have always been created by Grace. But at the cross, God reveals Grace. He creates faith in Grace, in you. God is Grace. Once you trust Grace, you’re free to Love, and to Love is to enter life—eternal life. In other words: You are forgiven—*aphiemi*. You are suffered; you are allowed. You are forgiven the 10,000 talents—the Kingdom. So why wouldn’t you forgive a few thousand dollars?

Well, clearly, if you don’t forgive your brother it’s because you don’t really believe that you are forgiven your life or that your life is valued at 10,000 talents. I mean, if I really believed that I was worth 10,000 talents, if I really believed God looked at me and said to Himself, “I would gladly give my life for him,” well, I’d have so much dignity in my tank that Susan could take one hundred dignity units, and I might be concerned for her, but I’d forgive her the dignity units the moment she took them. She might even take “my life,” but I’d gladly give my life. I’d present myself a “living sacrifice.” I’d know that even as I

gave “my life,” or His Life, there is always more life, like a river of life. But if I held on to the Life, as if my life were my own private possession, I’d dam the life, and I’d damn me, and I’d even damn Jesus in me—imprisoned in my “dignity reservoir”—I’d damn the Life.

Do you get the picture? It’s like we are literally the Body of Christ, and “individually members thereof.” We are vessels, not to be closed but open (blood vessels). The Spirit is Life, and the Life—the Breath is in the blood. If you hold on to your life, the life dies, but if you “lose your life, you find it. When you bleed out, the heart pumps more in. Life is a river that circulates through all the members of the Body. When you refuse to forgive the Life, it’s because you don’t trust that you’re constantly forgiven the Life, so you hang on to the Life and dam the Life, and you damn Jesus in a prison that is your damned life—your *psyche*—your ridiculous dignity reservoir.

The Lord says, “*Deliver him to the tormentors.*” You see? I think the unforgiving slave is already in a prison that is his own *psyche*—his pride. “*Deliver him to the tormentors*” if you refuse to forgive, expect to be tormented by demons. And Jesus Himself may even feel like torment. When you reject Grace, Grace will burn. “*Deliver him to the tormentors until...until...until? he pays his debt.*” And what is his debt? It’s 10,000 talents! It’s his life! It’s THE Life trapped within himself. We all must lose our life to find it.

People trapped in Hades are people trapped in death because...

They’re too terrified to die.

They’re too terrified to lose their life because they think they created the life.

They’re too terrified to forgive because they don’t know they’re constantly forgiven.

They’re too terrified to surrender the Spirit so they hang on to the Spirit; they blaspheme the Spirit.

But...

They must surrender the spirit. They must expire to inspire.

They must forgive, for unforgiveness is unforgivable.

They must lose themselves to find themselves.

They must die.

Jesus came to help us die. He is the death of death, and He even descends into Hades. He is the death of Hades.

Jesus is the Life, and Jesus is the Way.

Jesus is the Perfect Servant. He is the Ultimate Adam.

When He died, we all died in Him, and when we rise, we all rise with Him.

We are His Body.

When Jesus humbled Himself and road a jackass up the hill, which we call Mt. Zion (like Abraham and Isaac road a jackass up the same hill 2,000 years before to offer their lives)...When Jesus road up the hill to sacrifice His life, in the garden on the tree,

He returned the fruit to the tree

He returned the Life to God

He returned the blood to the heart—the temple.

He lifted His head and delivered up the Spirit—the Spirit God breathed into Adam.

He died so all could live.

He expired so all could inspire...and expire...and inspire...and expire...and inspire...

The Father forgave the Life. It's an eternal river of Life, and it flows through your veins when you forgive and are forgiven.

One Sunday morning about three years ago I was preaching from Ephesians 2:14-16 and my friend Michael was listening. It reads:

*For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, **16** and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.*

Michael says he heard the Lord say, "Read it again." He did. And then he heard it over and over...and he read it over and over multiple times.

Michael writes:

Then I was transported. I was no longer in the sanctuary; I was in Heaven standing in front of Jesus, crucified. He was right there in front of me, His body broken, bloodied, and bruised. [Jesus was nailed to the tree] It was beautiful! A voice cried out. "Go ahead. You know what to do. Go get them. Go on, now. They're waiting."

At that moment, a certainty came over me that I've never felt before. I knew exactly what to do. An indiscernible elation overwhelmed me and filled me with a confidence I'd never known. It was the joy of anticipation. I walked around the left side of the crucifix and as I walked past Jesus, the backside of the crucifix was dark. There was no light—only sadness, misery, loneliness, and hatred. Though I saw it, I felt none of it. All I felt was strength, and the joy of love. Then I reached out my hand and said, "Come, take my hand. It's gonna be okay." Standing before me was my enemy, shaking, scared, and hesitant. "It's okay," I said. "Come on, take my hand. We'll go there together. They're waiting for you. It's so beautiful. You'll love it!"

My enemy reached out his hand. I grabbed it, turned away from him, and I walked forward, holding on tight, not looking back—just walking straight, strong, and true. I felt my enemy's reluctance. I knew he wasn't sure, but I said nothing. I just kept walking. It was a short

distance, but it seemed to take a while. Then, as with a leap, we jumped through the body of Christ. [Christ crucified on the tree] Right through his body, blood and all. I pulled my enemy through Christ Himself. It was a wicked feeling. A beautiful, wicked feeling. I felt all the pain and suffering—not His pain and suffering, but mine, and my friend's. Oh... I mean my enemy's.

It all happened so fast. It was a beautiful, cleansing renewal, and a feeling of unbelievable joy. I had been given the gift to deliver my new friend, who was my enemy, from the bowls of hell. All he had to do was take my hand. You know that feeling you have when your bride says I do? Or when your child says I love you? Or your dad gives you that hug, or you accept Jesus into your life? It was kind of like all of those, wrapped into one. And I got to share this with the person I hated most—the person who hated me.

What a joyous feeling. What a gift the Father had given me. The most blessed feeling ever! Then to hug my friend, who was my enemy, release his hand and watch him walk into heaven—his home, to see him home, at last, and to know that I got to bring him there: Thank you, Father.

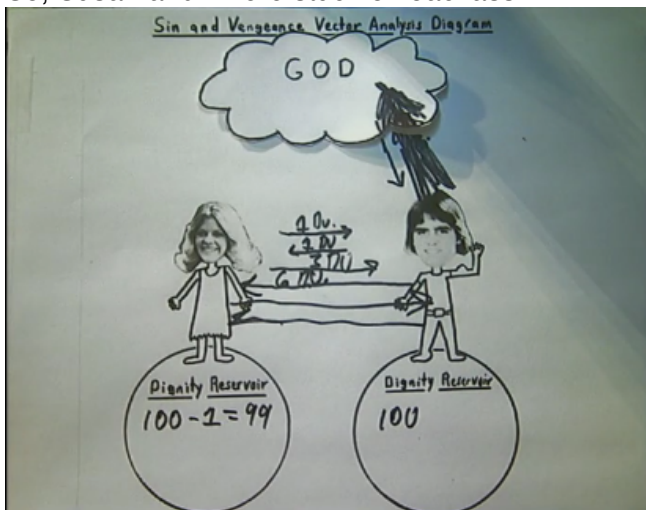
Then He said, "Go ahead. Do it again!"

And Michael did. At the time, Michael had suffered some extremely painful and unjust blows at the hands of several enemies, who had truly taken his life. But if they hadn't taken his life, he wouldn't have experienced the ecstasy of giving his life—the eternal life—the life of Jesus.

He writes:

I can't recall how many times I got to do this, writes Michael, but it was so much fun. I loved everything about it. Then I was pulled back to the sanctuary. Peter was blessing the body and blood.

So, Susan and I were stuck on Jackass Hill:



The sun was going down on our anger, and our anger was only growing. Each confrontation only made it worse for we demanded payment. So each, “I’m sorry,” had to be at least as painful as the original offense, and most of the “I’m sorrys” were just weapons of further vengeance.

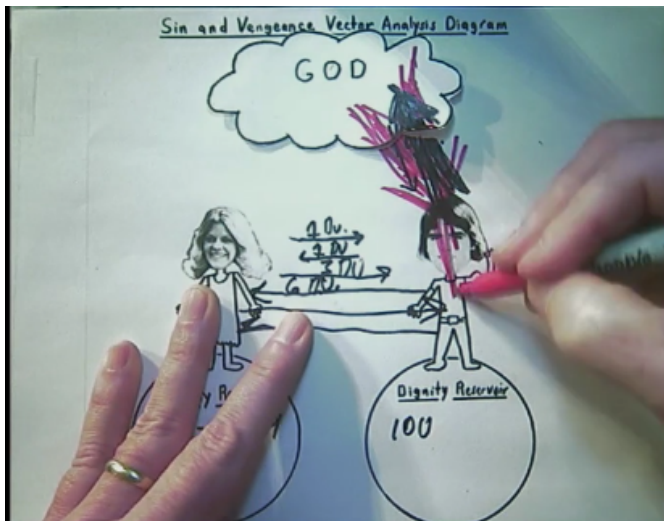
The sins were too numerous to comprehend. But not just sins, we were sin, and our dignity reservoirs were just about entirely empty. We were in torment—tormented by loneliness and terrified of real communion.

Then, finally, in desperation and by grace, we saw what we needed, and for the first time in our relationship, we reached out and grabbed hands and actually prayed...to a King, who gave absolutely everything for a sixteen year old, selfish, self-centered, insecure boy, and a sixteen year old, selfish, self-centered, insecure girl.

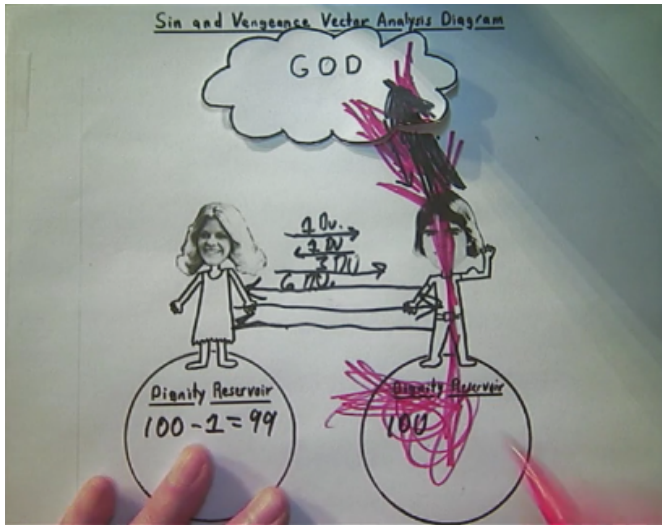
When we did that, we began to see the Glory of God. (Dignity really isn’t a Bible Word, but “Glory” is.) Jesus reveals the glory of God. It’s a mystery in the Old Testament, but it’s revealed at the cross. It is a relentless river of Life that flows from the throne upon which stands a slaughtered lamb.

I don’t possess that river, the river possesses me.
I don’t possess the Glory, but God constantly gives the glory.
The Glory isn’t taking, the Glory is Giving.
The River flows in the opposite direction of this world and my ego.

What happens is He reverses the flow.
Where I take, He reveals that He freely gives—a river of eternal Life.



The River flows from the throne and breaks me open and fills me with a flood of mercy—it destroys the dam, opens my dignity reservoir with a flood of Mercy—It destroys the dam.

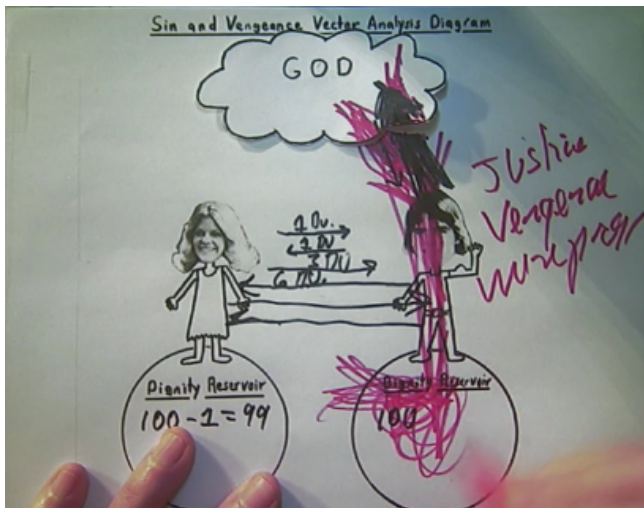


...And I have mercy, I am forgiven and I forgive...

The River destroys my old Psyche, with a flood of life, I die and begin to live eternal life.

The River is the Justice of God and Vengeance of God,

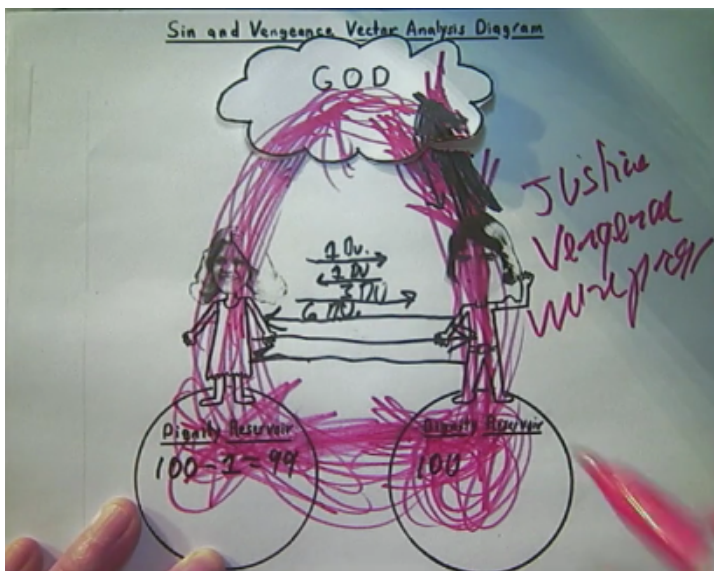
"The winepress of the fury of the wrath of God."



Grace is the wrath of God; it flows into my *psyche*; it bursts my *psyche*. I am forgiven and I begin to forgive. It flows in to Susan. It bursts her *psyche* and then she gives praise, thanksgiving and worship back to God.



Then God pours out His mercy onto Susan and it flows back to me, and I give thanks and it flows back to the throne. It is this River that keeps flowing endlessly.



It has always existed; it's always been there; we've just entered the River, and it has swept us away. We are two people gathered together, and He is in our midst. We are three people and one substance.

When we forgive

- We give God the Glory, and He bleeds his life into us ("The life is in the blood") He bleeds that Glory back into us, and we bleed it into each other.
- We are two people gathered in his name, *synago ecclessia*, and He is in our midst.

- We share one life, like three persons and one life—one body.

Jackass Hill turns into Mt. Calvary and Mt. Calvary into Mount Zion—the City of the Living God.

We prayed. She gave me a kiss. We were free.

Communion

So on the night that all humanity made themselves the enemy of God, The Glory of God took the bread and broke it saying: “This is my Body given to you take and eat.” And He took the cup saying, “This is the life. (The life is in the blood) This is my blood of the Covenant, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you in remembrance of me.”

Close your eyes and ask the King: “Is there someone I need to forgive?” If you’re like me there are probably some people you need to keep forgiving every morning. This is how you destroy the works of the devil, say, “In the name of Jesus, in the authority and power of the blood, I forgive...(then say their name).

Benediction

Jesus said, “*The one forgiven much loves much.*” This whole sermon has been about telling you: “You are forgiven much.” If you ask, “Exactly how much am I forgiven?” you are forgiven everything! Absolutely everything. So, when you prayed just now, you might have prayed forgiveness over a certain person. In the vision I shared, Michael’s vision, it took awhile for the whole thing to happen. You may not even ever say something to that person. But what have you done for yourself? Well, you have reversed the flow.

So when you talk to that person you’re no longer trying to suck the life out of them. You are no longer trying to get your one hundred denarii back. They no longer owe you anything. But you owe them something: the love of God. And it all ends in absolute glory. So, in Jesus’ name believe the Gospel, and live! You are free!

Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don’t be shy about informing us of errors.