

Forgiving Each Other
Colossians 3:13

Forgiving Each Other

Not only are we to put up with one another, we are to forgive one another. This Christian life is getting more and more demanding. And yes it is!

We are studying Acts on Wednesday. So far, we are in the first few months of the Church Age. We have already seen the first two problems in the church from within the church. The first was over money and the second was because of problems between believers.

This is exactly why Paul wrote Colossians 3-4 which concentrates on believers' interactions with one another: a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness in adversity, longsuffering, putting up with one another and now forgiving each other.

But remember, the reason for all these demands on our Christian life in getting along with one another is because we are each one related to each other by the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. We should strive to get along so that the local church can fulfill its responsibilities of spreading the gospel to both believers and unbelievers.

And remember, none of these demands can be accomplished in the flesh. Each one demands the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes in our lives, someone does something that we say we just cannot forgive them!

So, let's start off with a powerful principle: you cannot forgive, as God dictates that you forgive in the power of the flesh. Many Christians work

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hard in the energy of the flesh to forgive. Many times, they cannot forgive and even when they are able to forgive in the flesh, it is partial forgiveness or forgiveness with strings attached. Forgiving in the flesh means nothing in the Spiritual Warfare.

Colossians 3:13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

forgiving This is a *Present Middle Participle* of the Greek verb that comes from the root *charis* — grace. The verb means to show someone a favor, be kind to, to give or bestow a thing willingly; to give generously, bestow, remit, forgive, release, pardon; to give or forgive graciously, freely, cheerfully. The word means to give without strings; to completely forgive. This is an *iterative present tense* which is used to describe what reoccurs at successive intervals. As we develop this word, the question arises: How can a believer forgive graciously and especially, cheerfully, certain things another believer does to him or to someone he loves? You have to be in proper relationship with God and with Jesus Christ and with the Holy Spirit.

If you are reaping in your life what God sows, you are being blessed by God. Therefore, to forgive someone is easy, not difficult at all. But you have to be right with God no matter what is going on in your life. Then, you can forgive with no strings attached. It is easy!

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But please know that if you try to forgive on your own, in your flesh nature, there will be strings attached. But when you forgive in the power of the Holy Spirit in Spiritual Love, there are no strings attached.

The *iterative present* is very important. This describes what happens in your life, throughout your life! There will be times when people, husband, wife, family, friends, at church, at work, will offend you in very specific ways and sometimes in a very horrible way. And, you are well aware of it and you are even hurt by it. Now is the great challenge to love as Christ loves which means now is the opportunity for you to forgive with no strings attached.

The *middle voice* of this verb is used to describe the subject (that's you) participating in the action of the verb.

Question: what is our part in participating in forgiveness? First, Faith in the Holy Spirit. Then, the act of forgiving in His power and in His love. And you know what this means? This means you reap what God sows. The believer (that's you) is forgiving in the power of the Holy Spirit. Oh, and the *participle*; what about the *participle*? This is one of those places where the *participle* acts as an *imperative*. And you know by now that the obedience that God is always looking for is Faith!

forgiving each other This is not forgiving another of the same kind. This time we have a *reciprocal pronoun*. This means that because we are each in the family of God (baptism of the Holy Spirit), we are under relational obligation, binding all believers equally. **'forgiving ourselves'** What this *simple pronoun* is teaching us is that because of our union together in Christ we are in a bilateral commitment with each other with reciprocal

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rights and duties. One of our duties as a family member in Christ is to forgive other believers who are also in Christ. They may not be acting like they are members of the Body of Christ, but that is no excuse for you not to continue forgiving.

**Colossians 3:13 Putting up with one another
of the same kind and completely forgiving
each other (as joint members of the body of
Christ...)**

In other words, this is forgiving yourselves. This is further explained in the next phrase:

whoever has a complaint against anyone The Greek word for ‘complaint’ is rarely used in classical Greek and only here in the New Testament. It refers to whatever blame or cause exists for complaint. This is where this gets complicated. All through this verse we have ‘reciprocal action.’ This means that if someone comes to you with a grievance, that is with a complaint, you are to do whatever you can do, to the best of your ability to straighten things out. But the point here is that you are to forgive them of whatever that cause of complaint is. This means that we should be very careful in our dealings with one another.

Principle: If a family member or friend comes and wants to borrow money, do not lend the money if you cannot afford to lose it.

That is, if they do not pay you back, you are to forgive them completely and move on in your own Spiritual Life.

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Here is the point of this forgiveness. Forgiving with no strings attached sets you free to go on with your own spiritual life in Christ. Your spiritual life is not now hampered by something this other believer does to you. If you do not forgive, but you seek revenge, or you carry animosity in your soul toward them, you cannot be filled with the Holy Spirit. This means you cannot love Christ, you cannot worship, you cannot learn the Word of God. They and what they did is simply not that important to allow them to ruin your spiritual life. Think about this. Think about what they have done, as horrible as it is, is it worth compounding the problem by your staying out of fellowship with Holy Spirit? “OK,” you reply, “But is it right that they just go on and ‘get away’ with the wrong they have done?” Is this up to you? Really? Is their getting away with it or not getting away with it, really your concern? Isn’t that up to God? And be honest here. Don’t just ‘say’ yes because you know that is the right answer. Mean it. And if you mean it, then you can easily forgive them and go on with your life in Christ. Or, is this important to you? Is what they did to you more important to you than you living your own life in Christ? Here is where you have to set up the priorities in your own life. What is more important to you? I pray that living your life in Christ and growing in His Word is more important than anything, anyone can do to you.

Now we come to the standard of such forgiveness.

**Colossians 3:13 ...Forgiving each other,
whoever has a complaint against anyone, just
as the Lord forgave you, so also should you**

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just as this sets up a comparative standard, giving the manner in which something is to be done. We saw this in the New Commandment in John 13:34 where Jesus Christ said that we are to love one another just as He has loved us. Not love how you want it to be, but love in the same manner He loves you. Here we are to forgive one another **just as the Lord forgave you**. The reason most people have trouble here is that they recognize only Jesus Christ as Lord. But the Word of God recognizes all members of the Godhead as Lord including the Holy Spirit. When it comes to forgiveness, this is what God the Father does toward all members of the human race because of what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross and Resurrection.

Just as the Lord that is God the Father **forgave you** *Aorist Active Indicative* of the same verb we just had in that we are to forgive one another.

Aorist God the Father forgives all members of the human race in Christ. This is clearly what Paul is referring to here as in **Ephesians 4:32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other**. This is the same construction as in Col. 3:13 just as only here Paul says **God**. But note how and why God forgives **in Christ also has forgiven you**. Here is another example where the chapter breaks are in the wrong place. Remember chapter and verses are not divinely inspired as the text.

**Ephesians 5:1 Therefore be imitators of God,
as beloved children;**

How are we going to imitate God? Not in all His essence and attributes and actions but in this one: forgiving one another as God has forgiven you. OK, why are we to forgive one another of any complaint?

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1. So that we can move on in the Plan of God for our lives and not get side tracked – get out of the filling of the Holy Spirit, stop our spiritual momentum because of anger or revenge or self-pity. No, we forgive them completely and move on in the Plan of God for us.
2. Now we have a second reason for forgiving one another. Because, this is what God has done to us.

So that we can head off a lot of questions about one believer forgiving another believer, let's take a look at

What forgiveness of sins does not accomplish

- (1) Forgiveness of sins does not result in Salvation.
- (2) For there to be salvation, there must be the imputation of Righteousness, which comes only by faith in Jesus Christ.
- (3) Forgiveness does not result in salvation. For there to be salvation there must be personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior.
- (4) Forgiveness **does not** automatically **result in reconciliation**. Forgiveness always sets up **the opportunity** for reconciliation and fellowship but does not automatically mean reconciliation. Reconciliation comes by faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and fellowship comes by or through the Holy Spirit.
- (5) Forgiveness takes away the wrath of God for sins but does not take away the wrath of God for refusing to believe in Jesus Christ as Savior.
- (6) For believers in Jesus Christ, forgiveness does not mean there will not be discipline in that believer's life.

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Forgiveness from God is heart and center of Christian belief. It is at the foundation!

- Failure of understanding Forgiveness from God effects a multitude of other doctrines. This failure is part of the reason for believers thinking they can lose their salvation (Eternal Security).
- Correct understanding of forgiveness effects our relationship with God and effects our relationship with each other -- Forgiving one another. There are several passages where we are to FORGIVE AS HE FORGIVES US. So, if you do not know HOW God forgives you, then you will not know how to forgive.

Nearly every Christian likes to talk about forgiveness but when it comes to the Real test, most Christians FAIL. Though they like to claim that they do Forgive, they also like to have a few tricks with the Scripture so that they can get by with not doing what Scripture demands and what can be done only in power of Holy Spirit. Before a Test, forgiveness means this and that. But, once they are really tested, well, forgiveness now means something else. Then, they go through some real spiritual gymnastics. But the truth is They cannot forgive.

The absence of Forgiveness is one of the great inner problems with many Christians. Deep in their soul they carry scars of hate, anger, bitterness, resentment that comes out at times of pressure in very UGLY ways. And the people I am addressing are not forgiving those who have died. That's right. Many Christians harbor in their souls resentments and even hatred toward someone who has died. Forgive them so you can advance in your own Christian life.

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Another great problem with forgiveness is that in reality, what we think of forgiveness between one another is a reflection of what we think of forgiveness from God. What kind of God do you have? What kind of forgiveness does your God forgive with? Many Christians have the problem of How can God Forgive me – of some horrible sin or sins; failure after failure...like abortion. God cannot forgive me!

HOW many times will God forgive me?

What must I do to be forgiven by God?

What happens when God does forgive me?

All these have a great bearing on our Forgiving one another.

1. God forgives sin because of the work of Christ on the cross.
2. God forgives of all sins, because Christ bore the judgment for all sins.
3. To be forgiven, live a life of faith in His Spirit.

Col. 3:13 ...forgiving each other...

Each Other is a *reflexive pronoun*: What you do to yourself. The use of the *reflexive pronoun* here, was determined by an act of forgiveness. ****Reflexive pronoun* here looks at the Whole Body of Jesus Christ as One. Therefore, this is what the body does to ITSELF...It forgives itself.

1. It forgives BECAUSE it is Himself! That is why we are to forgive, simply because the other person IS in the Body of Christ and the Body forgives itself!

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2. The pattern for this forgiveness is as God forgives. The basis of this forgiveness is the Cross Work of Jesus Christ.

This is very important in forgiving each other. “You mean that we are to forgive another person JUST because they are believers?”...YES!

But the basis, the foundation of that Forgiveness is because of the cross.

Because the body of Jesus Christ is viewed as ONE, therefore, Reciprocal action of forgiveness.

Forgiveness is something that all Christians are to show to themselves mutually. Therefore the *reflexive pronoun* **forgive yourselves**. Yes, in one sense it is like forgiving yourself. Only in this case you are another believer. Therefore, one of the great problems is that believers do not look at each other as an extension of self in Christ.

Therefore, the universal illustration or pattern is set by Jesus Christ at the cross, which every Christian has personally experienced at the point of faith in Jesus Christ. The Forgiveness that we receive from Jesus Christ at the cross, binds us by pattern and power to deal the same with one another. Forgiving each other is characteristic of the Body. We do this mutually to each other. Individual Christians are to act toward one another in the same spirit as they themselves received from Jesus Christ.

DEFINITION:

The Greek word used for forgiveness here in Col. 3:13 and in Eph. 4:32 means:

1. To show someone favor,
2. Be kind to

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3. To give or bestow a thing willingly,
4. To pardon,
5. Graciously remit a person's sin,
6. To forgive.

But for a working definition: from Charles Stanley's book on Forgiveness [The Gift of Forgiveness];

“Forgiveness is the act of setting someone free from an obligation to you that is the result of a wrong done against you.”

And “True forgiveness, then, involves three elements, all of which are necessary: an injury, a debt resulting from the injury, and a cancellation of the debt.”

INJURY-----DEBT-----CANCELLATION

1. Begin with a friendly relationship: harmony...
2. Then the disruption of this relationship due to a wrong or sin, some complaint, some provocation, real or presumed.
3. This disruption leads to an interruption – end — stoppage; to current friendly function or service and involves hostility, enmity, anger, strife, hate, resentment and vengeance ...
4. By Process of Forgiveness that removes all this hate and hostility: this process is not to act as if the offense or sin or complaint never occurred, for it did occur and something must be done. This is forgiveness — all that must be done to remove the barrier and restore the relationship and function of that relationship.

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5. The Process involves Forgiveness. The barrier is removed by FORGIVENESS!

Some summary conclusions:

1. We are to recognize that other believers will sin against us, fail us, do things against us that cause us to have a complaint against them that breaks fellowship, that causes us to become angry, seek revenge and desire to judge them and condemn them.
2. We are told in the New Testament, what we are to do when a believer sins against us. We are to forgive them. This involves an end of hostility, anger, seeking revenge or judgment against them and results in Reconciliation if both desire reconciliation.
3. As to the meaning and result of forgiveness, all we have to do is to go to the cross to see how God the Father Forgives us. And we will see How we are to Forgive and the result of that forgiveness on our part of one another. Many try to claim there are different kinds of forgiveness: impersonal and personal, but no such concepts can be found in the New Testament. As with forgiveness of God the Father and of Jesus Christ of us, and how He forgave us is how we are to forgive...

Colossians 2:13 And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you ALIVE TOGETHER WITH HIM, having forgiven us all our transgressions,

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4. Almost everyone knows about Peter's question to our Lord on forgiving 70 x 7 times. But, that is not really what he means. Most cannot even forgive the seven times that Peter first asked about (believer forgiving believer). What is being said here is that we are to forgive another believer as often as they sin against us.
5. Another great problem with believers forgiving believers is, we cannot forgive every type of sin, just little ones. But, look at:

Matthew 12:31 "Therefore I say to you, ANY sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. (We are to FORGIVE as He forgives us)

Matthew 12:32 "And whoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age, or in the age to come.

“I just can't forgive him/her of this” yet GOD – Jesus Christ DOES FORGIVE, even Blasphemy!

6. Another difficult passage – where God does not forgive: Mark 11:24-26.

Mark 11:24 "Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you

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have received them, and they shall be granted you.

Mark 11:25 "And whenever you stand praying, FORGIVE if you have anything against anyone;...

Most believers hold inside their complaint against another believer letting it build up in them until they can really hurt that other person. And even then, it stays in their soul.

Mark 11:25 ...so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions.

Same word is used of man and of God doing the forgiveness — so don't try to change the meaning. Oh, but mine are not as bad as the other believer....in your eyes...but in God's, sin is sin and the effect of any sin is that it results in carnality, darkness from which we must be saved.

Mark 11:26 "But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions."

What is going on here? If you deal with others according to Law, then it will be by LAW that God will deal with you.

7. Another difficult passage for many Christians who try to find ways for scripture NOT to say what it says:

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Luke 17:3 "Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.

Note: We REPENT with each other to APPROPRIATE FORGIVENESS FROM one another. BUT TO RECEIVE FORGIVENESS FROM GOD - -- OUR FAITH — HIS FORGIVENESS

Luke 17:4 And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him."

Same sin, over AND over question? How do I know if they have really repented? Answer: that is not up to you. That is between them and God. We are to forgive over and over! Believers demand signs of repentance. They demand cleansing and that they will never do it again. NO...We forgive.

I love verse 5: disciples know that they cannot forgive like that;

Luke 17:5 And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"

They realized they could not do this in flesh. But, in the power of the Holy Spirit they can.

8. One final reminder about Forgiveness: Many believers have a problem with forgiving one another because they want their Forgiveness to do things that forgiveness cannot do.

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- (1) We cannot cleanse another believer by our forgiveness: so many believers do not want to forgive because they just know the other believer will do it again. And that troubles them and prevents them from FORGIVING. Cleansing is the work of God. Only God can cleanse, God the Holy Spirit.
- (2) Our forgiveness cannot TAKE AWAY the sins or failures of others...
- (3) Our forgiveness cannot save or deliver from sins...**ONLY GOD CAN DO THAT.**
- (4) Our forgiveness cannot COVER the sins of others...only the “blood of Jesus Christ” can do that.
- (5) Our forgiveness DOES NOT PURIFY. Only Jesus Christ’s work on the cross can do this.
- (6) Our forgiveness DOES NOT PROPITIATE -- Jesus Christ is PROPITIATION...not us.
- (7) **SO BE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT YOUR FORGIVENESS CAN AND CANNOT DO AND DON’T REACT WHEN YOU REALIZE THAT YOUR FORGIVENESS CANNOT CLEANSE ANOTHER BELIEVER.**

Forgive and move on in the Plan of God for you.

The word “forgiveness” is used only by Luke and Paul.

In Luke 7:21 the Lord is said to ‘grant’ sight back to the blind.

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And in Luke 7:42-43 it has the direct meaning 'to forgive'

Luke 7:42 “When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?”

43 Simon answered and said, “I suppose the one whom he forgave more.” And He said to him, “You have judged correctly.”