

FORGIVENESS #13

Ephesians 4:31 – 32. *31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 and be you kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you.*

Colossians 3:12 – 14. *12 Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; 13 forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do you: 14 and above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness.*

This series started by seeking to demonstrate **the centrality of forgiveness** in biblical revelation, that is, when we pick up our Bibles and ask the question, "What's the Bible all about?" we cannot turn to any section of this Book without coming to the conviction that the Divine way of forgiveness of sin is central to the material found in our Bibles. We noted that:

(i) FORGIVENESS IS CENTRAL IN THE CHARACTER AND DISPOSITION OF GOD.

(ii) FORGIVENESS IS CENTRAL IN THE SUBSTANCE AND PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL.

(iii) FORGIVENESS IS CENTRAL BOTH IN THE INITIAL, AND ONGOING EXPERIENCE OF THE TRUE CHILDREN OF GOD.

That initial study was summarized by making this statement: "The God Whose disposition is to forgive, has procured and proclaimed in the gospel, the way of forgiveness through Christ and, by means of that Gospel embraced, He gathers men and women into His church. These men and women that make up His church are both a forgiven and a forgiving people."

The God Who has a disposition of forgiveness has procured and proclaimed in the gospel the way of forgiveness, thereby constituting in those who embrace the gospel a community marked by forgiveness –a people who are forgiven and forgiving sinners. That's what the church is. That's not all it is, but that's what it is in its essential identity.

Next **A BIBLICAL DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION OF WHAT FORGIVENESS IS** was constructed.

This was done by looking at the seven major Hebrew and Greek words used to convey the reality of forgiveness in the Old and the New Testament's.

Then a number of vivid word pictures were considered by which God describes what happens when He forgives, and what should happen when we forgive one another. The working definition and description of forgiveness is as follows:

DIVINE FORGIVENESS [that is vertical forgiveness –the forgiveness that God extends to sinners] is that gracious act of a Holy, Just and Loving God, by which He removes from the sinner the guilt and the liabilities of their sin, thereby clearing the way for a restored relationship between Himself and the sinner.

HUMAN FORGIVENESS is a gracious, godlike act of one sinner to another sinner, by which the offended party makes a commitment of their will not to remember the sin of the offending party, thereby clearing the way to a restored relationship between both parties.

That commitment is a four-pronged commitment. When I say to someone who has asked my forgiveness for a specific offense, "I forgive you," I am making a pledge and commitment of my will that has four prongs to it. I am saying:

(i) I am committing not to voluntarily and volitionally remember this issue. If it pops up upon the screen of my mind, I push the delete button. I do not go back over it, I do not mull over it. I have determined to put it away.

(ii) I will not raise it with the person who has sought my forgiveness.

(iii) I will not raise the issue with others.

(iv) I will not allow it to remain a barrier in my relationship to the one who has sought my forgiveness

Then, having hammered out this biblical definition and description of forgiveness, we moved in the next message to what was one of the most crucial issues in this entire series. **THE PATTERN FOR OUR FORGIVING** one another is God's forgiveness of us. A careful examination of Ephesians 4:32 was considered, noting this central fact: that God's forgiveness of us in Christ, is to be both the basis, the motive, and the pattern, of our forgiving one another. We are commanded to forgive one another "even as God in Christ forgave us."

We saw in our study of that passage that God's forgiveness is an act of free, overflowing grace. It is located in the Person and Work of Christ. It is a forgiveness rooted in the love of God.

So if we are confused about how God in Christ forgives us, we'll be confused about how we are to forgive one another.

With that foundation block in place [the pattern for our forgiving one another is God's forgiveness of us] we address the question, what are the conditions upon which, this Divine forgiveness is conferred?

IS GOD'S FORGIVENESS OF US CONDITIONAL OR UNCONDITIONAL?

*We are not asking, if His love is unconditional –that's clear. His love is unconditional, that is, it is not conditioned by anything in us, not by anything He does in us, nor is His love to us based upon some response we would make in the future.

WE ARE NOT ASKING IS HIS DISPOSITION TO FORGIVE UNCONDITIONAL. WE ARE ASKING, IS THE CONFERRAL OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS, CONDITIONAL OR UNCONDITIONAL?

The unanimous testimony of Scripture is that God's forgiveness, rooted in His unconditional love, manifested in the sending of His Son, presently filling His own heart as His disposition towards us, is never conferred unconditionally. God does not extend unconditional forgiveness. He forgives when we own our sin and seek forgiveness. Our forgiveness of one another is to parallel God's forgiveness of us.

God's forgiveness is conferred upon REPENTANCE AND FAITH. God's forgiveness towards us is conditioned upon repentance and faith. Those conditions are not meritorious. Those conditions are not self-generated. Nonetheless, no one, who is still an impenitent sinner, can say they are forgiven by God. No one can say they are forgiven by God if they are still an unbelieving sinner. It is only penitent, believing sinners that can lay claim to forgiveness according to the Scriptures and therefore, if God's forgiveness of us is the paradigm or the pattern of our forgiveness of one another, all of this talk about unconditional forgiveness ought to make us a bit suspicious of it, and we ought to question whether or not it is rooted in a sound handling of the Word of the Living God.

Therefore all this loose talk about horizontal or relational forgiveness being unconditional absolutely violates the Divine paradigm of forgiveness.

Next **FOUR COMMON MISTAKES** concerning the privilege and duty of the mutual, horizontal, human, forgiveness were taken up. We noted that:

(i) THERE WAS A FAILURE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE RELINQUISHMENT OF VENGEANCE AND THE MORTIFYING OF BITTERNESS, AND CALLING THIS FORGIVENESS. It is not forgiveness. When I say, "Lord I will not take vengeance, that's Your prerogative" I recognize the sin still exists. God will deal with it with vengeance, in His time and in His way.

Likewise, there is a second mistake. **(ii) A FAILURE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE DISPOSITION OF A FORGIVING SPIRIT AND THE ACT OF FORGIVENESS ITSELF.** I am always to have, by the grace of God, a disposition of readiness to forgive as God does, **Psalm 86:5** "You Lord are good and ready to forgive, plenteous in mercy to all that call upon You." ***THE DISPOSITION OF FORGIVENESS IS NOT THE CONFERRAL OF FORGIVENESS.** The conferral of forgiveness can happen only when acknowledgment of the fault and the seeking of forgiveness is expressed by the offender. It's a mistake not to distinguish between the disposition of forgiveness (that is always to be present) and the act of forgiveness itself.

The third mistake is this, **(iii) A FAILURE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN A LOVE-MOTIVATED, UNILATERAL COVERING OF THE SIN, AND THE BILATERAL CONFERRAL OF FORGIVENESS.** There are certain sins, according to the Scriptures, that I am to cover with the blanket of love, but the covering of the sin in love, is not to be considered forgiveness. God uses words for forgiveness and He uses a different word for covering.

And the fourth mistake is, **(iv) A FAILURE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN LOVING ONE'S ENEMIES AND FORGIVING ONE'S ENEMIES.** We are called upon to love our enemies, to bless those that curse us, to do good to those that spitefully use us, but we are not called upon to unconditionally forgive our enemies.

Then **4 PRACTICAL, PASTORAL PERSPECTIVES** concerning mutual forgiveness were considered next. The first was that:

(i) THE COMMON PRACTICE OF APOLOGIZING AND THE BIBLICAL PATTERN OF CONFESSION AND SEEKING FORGIVENESS ARE NOT IDENTICAL AND INTERCHANGEABLE THINGS. The common practice of apologizing was described and illustrated, then these three things in common apologizing were identified. These three things make it fall short of the biblical concept of confessing, seeking, and receiving forgiveness of sin.

Then we analyzed what an apology may be from the best thing it can be, to the worst thing that it often is –when we use it as a substitute for the flesh-weathering, grace-

exulting, biblical pattern of owning our sin as sin and seeking the forgiveness of another for that sin.

(ii) SECONDLY, THE CONFERRAL OF GOSPEL FORGIVENESS, COMPLETELY AND WITHOUT RESERVE, AND THE RESTORATION OF DAMAGED TRUST ARE SEPARATE, AND DISTINCTLY DIFFERENT ISSUES.

The difference between conferring forgiveness completely and without reserve and the earning of trust and confidence that has been broken were taken up, because these are areas where the people of God often struggle. Forgiveness can be completely and without reserve conferred while trust is still shattered. Conferral of forgiveness happens in a point in time, while the restoration of trust betrayed takes time. The 3rd, practical, pastoral, perspective was this:

(iii) THE CONFERRAL OF GOSPEL FORGIVENESS OF SIN DOES NOT CANCEL OR REVERSE THE NATURAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE SIN THAT IS FREELY AND FULLY FORGIVEN. The last pastoral perspective was:

(iv) THE CONFERRAL OF GOSPEL FORGIVENESS OF SINS DOES NOT PRECLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF CHASTISEMENT FOR THE SIN THAT HAS BEEN FREELY, AND FULLY, FORGIVEN.

Two things by way of qualification of this principle, that sin forgiven with gospel forgiveness does not preclude divine chastisement for that sin already forgiven.

(i) SUCH CHASTISEMENT IS THE ACTIVITY OF A LOVING, RECONCILED FATHER, AND NOT THE JUDICIAL PUNISHMENT OF AN ANGRY AND ALIENATED JUDGE.

(ii) SUCH CHASTISEMENT IS A FRUIT OF THE PERFECT SACRIFICE FOR SIN MADE BY CHRIST, NOT A SUPPLEMENT TO THAT SACRIFICE.

The next two messages concerned what **IS THE CENTRAL TRUTH TAUGHT BY OUR LORD JESUS ON THE SUBJECT OF FORGIVENESS.** Matthew 6:12,14,15 was expounded along with Mark 11:25, Luke 6:37 and Matthew 18:21–35 [the parable of the unjust servant]. We saw this truth, that is central in the teaching of our Lord, that **THE TRULY FORGIVEN BY GOD ARE ALSO THE TRULY FORGIVING OF ONE ANOTHER.** To state it negatively, **IF THERE IS NO FORGIVENESS EXTENDED TO THE MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY, THERE IS NO FORGIVENESS RECEIVED FROM THE FATHER.**

Following this, another vital aspect of the doctrine and practice of *mutual forgiveness* was established from the Scriptures. **THE OFFENDED PARTY HAS BOTH THE RIGHT AND THE RESPONSIBILITY, TO ASSESS THE GENUINENESS AND SINCERITY OF THE PROFESSED REPENTANCE, OF THE ONE WHO HAS SINNED AGAINST THEM, BEFORE EXTENDING**

FORGIVENESS. Matthew 18:15, Luke 17:3–4, 2 Corinthians 2: 4 – 11 were examined.

In another study, **SOME CONCLUDING BIBLICAL COUNSEL CONCERNING MUTUAL FORGIVENESS** was considered. Jesus assumes that we will, as long as we are in this life, always be both the offender and the offended. That's what He said, *When you pray say, forgive us our debts [we will be offenders] even as we forgive those who are indebted to us.* We will be both the forgiving and the one needing forgiveness. Paul assumes this in the passages we read at the start of this message –Ephesians 4:31 – 32 and Colossians 3:12 – 14. He assumes that in the best of congregations, God's people will at one and the same time be found in the category of offender and offended – the one who needs forgiveness, and the one who ought to forgive– therefore, Paul says, "forgiving one another." James assumes this. James says *confess your sins one to another.* In many things we all offend, therefore, it's vital that we understand how we are to respond when we are the offender. How am I to respond when I am the offender?

In our studies **COUNCILS WERE GIVEN** when we are the offender, when we have sinned against one another, remembering that all sin is ultimately against God and we must seek and obtain God's promised forgiveness.

COUNCIL #1 for us as the offenders, is to **PRAY FOR HUMILITY AND A PASSION FOR A LIKENESS TO CHRIST THAT WILL MAKE US APPROACHABLE, WILLING, AND EAGER TO BE SHOWN OUR SIN.** What would happen in any family or congregation where everyone had the attitude of the Psalm 141:5? "*Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness, it shall be as oil upon my head.*" The reluctance to go to a brother or a sister who has offended us, would be basically removed, but by nature we are so self-justifying, defensive, and touchy about seeing our sins, that it makes it difficult for us to do what the Scripture says. Since you and I are in the category of the offenders until we are taken home to glory, we need to pray for humility and for a passion to be like Christ that will make us earn the reputation for being approachable. Eager to be shown our sins. How can you sincerely pray in your devotions in the morning, "God make me more holy" and then be prickly where your wife or your husband shows you where you're not holy. Which is the real you? Will the real you please stand up. Are you the one who just mouths the prayers to be a more holy man or woman as you pray, or the one whose prickly when told by their spouse where they've been offensive or needs to make an adjustment? If we really want to be holy, if we really have

a passion to be like Christ, anyone who can show us our offense, is our friend. They are oil spillers. It shall be as oil upon my head.

COUNSEL #2 for us as the offenders is to **PRAY FOR HUMILITY AND A TENDER CONSCIENCE WITH RESPECT TO OUR SINS AGAINST ONE ANOTHER, AND A WILLINGNESS TO INITIATE THE ACTION THAT LEADS TO REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS.** Matthew 5:23–24. You're coming to worship, your conscience is sensitized, and you remember your brother has a just complaint against you. What did Jesus say? He said to leave your gift and go. Go means to be willing to take the initiative and say, "I was trying to pray this morning, and I remember the way I spoke to you as I left the prayer meeting the other night. My dear brother, I spoke to you in a way that was not right. Will you forgive me?" That's a sensitive conscience that does not lay the onus on the one who was offended. Instead, we take the responsibility upon ourselves that when we pray, "Search me O God and know me, try me and know my thoughts," and God answers that and brings to remembrance something we have reason to believe would give a brother or sister grounds to have something against us, what's the big deal to get on the phone and say, "I sinned, will you forgive me?" Pride is the big deal. So we need to cry to God for humility, for a tender conscience, and then:

COUNSEL #3 for us as the offenders is, **WE NEED TO PRAY FOR THE GRACE TO EXPERIENCE GENUINE REPENTANCE AND THE WISDOM TO EXPRESS THAT REPENTANCE IN SUCH A WAY TO THOSE WHOM WE'VE OFFENDED, THAT IT MAKES IT EASY FOR THEM TO SAY, "I FREELY FORGIVE YOU."** We saw from the Scriptures where God gives counsel about the very words that we bring in the context of repentance.

END REVIEW

In this message and the next, we will consider:

COUNCILS FOR US WHEN WE ARE THE OFFENDED.

In other words, councils for us when we have been sinned against.

Do you see the categories? We've consider the councils for us when we are the offender –when we have sinned. Now we consider councils for us when we are the offended –when we have been sinned against.

What council does the Word of God give us when we are the offended –when we have been the ones sinned against?

COUNCIL #1 – TOLERATE NOTHING LESS IN YOUR HEART, THAN THE GOD-LIKE DISPOSITION OF FORGIVENESS, FILLING YOUR HEART BY THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

When you are offended (regardless of when) and if you are able to speak to the offender, tolerate nothing less than the God-like **disposition** of forgiveness, filling our hearts by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

That brings us to ask this question and answer it: What is God's disposition to those who sin against Him? He does not confer His forgiveness, rooted in the work of Christ, until the sinner repents and believes, but is His disposition to forgive withheld until the repentance and faith of the sinner? No. The Scripture clearly teaches that God's disposition –regardless of where the sinner stands in relationship to desiring that forgiveness– is a **disposition of forgiveness.**

Psalm 86:5 *"For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness unto all them that call upon You."* The sinner or the saint calling upon God for forgiveness does not provoke Him to be a God of love and kindness and to be a good and ready to forgive God. He is such a God! As believers, knowing that He is, we call upon Him in the confidence that His forgiveness will be freely conferred because He doesn't have to scurry around to find forgiveness somewhere outside of Himself because the sinner is crying, "You Lord are good and ready to forgive." He is always ready to forgive. That's why we can say we must tolerate nothing less than the God-like disposition of forgiveness.

Remember our Lord's prayer from the cross in Luke 23:34. We studied it in some detail when we corrected one of the mistaken notions about forgiveness, namely, unconditional forgiveness. What was our Lord's prayer? When He had just been impaled upon the cross, **Luke 23:34** *"And Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."* He's not speaking a word of absolution. He spoke that word of absolution to several as recorded in the Gospels. *"Son, Your sins be forgiven you. Woman neither do I condemn you, go sin no more."* No. Here He is praying, 'Father, the disposition of My heart is not one of malediction and cursing. Father, the disposition of My heart is one of extending forgiveness even to those who have crucified Me. My Father, My heart is towards them in a disposition of forgiveness. If You would, so work to bring them to own their sin, repent of their sin, and believe in the grounds of forgiveness that I'm securing by My death. My forgiveness towards them and upon them is the desire of My heart.' Jesus didn't

pray, 'Father consume them in Your righteous anger,' but instead, 'Father, forgive them.' It's not surprising then, that when a man just a few hours before had been joining his buddy in mocking Jesus, and saying, 'If you are the Christ come on down from the cross and take care of Yourself and us,' for it says they both cast the same in His teeth. But Luke records that there upon the cross, this man simply uttered the words, 'Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.' What comes out of the Lord's mouth? "Today you, will be with Me, in paradise." The Lord didn't have to say, 'O Father help me now, this guy had been mocking me and jeering me. My spirit has been agitated with prayers of imprecation. Now Father help me, he's asking for mercy. I've got to change My disposition.' No. The disposition of Christ, towards the one who mocked Him and jeered Him while dying, was one of forgiveness, and the moment the man owned his need, the words of pardon and absolution were freely, divinely, spontaneously, and reflexively, given.

That's the God-like disposition of forgiveness that must fill our hearts by the ministry of the Holy Spirit at all times, no matter who has offended us, no matter how grievously they've offended us, and whether there is or not the slightest indication that they're prepared to own their offenses. You and I must tolerate nothing less than this God-like disposition of forgiveness to those who sinned against us.

The disposition of Jesus was beautifully mirrored in the first martyr Stephen. Stephen has been taken out, judged worthy of stoning and what does he do? **Acts 7:59** "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon the Lord, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." That spirit, that he asked Jesus to take into His presence. What characterized that spirit, that nonmaterial part of the very being of Stephen that could not be put to death by stones? "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." What was the disposition of that spirit that was about to be received into the presence of Jesus? **60** "And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." What an amazing thing. What was the disposition of Stephen's spirit? It was one of this God-like disposition of forgiveness. If Stephen had seen in the eyes of one of those men, even the look of questioning whether or not what he had done was right, and any expression of turning from that sin and acknowledging that the Christ Whom Stephen preached was all he claimed to be, no one would have died with greater joy, seeing a stoning enemy become a believer.

Why? Stephen's spirit was like the Savior into Whose presence he was just about to enter, but he had it here on earth before he entered.

We also have the example of David and Nathan. David commits adultery, murder by proxy, and then goes through at least a period of a year in a backslidden state. One can only imagine what that year must've been like. The prophet Nathan comes and tells his parable, David is stirred up, and Nathan says, "You're the man!" In **2 Samuel 12:13** it's recorded. **13** "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against Jehovah. And Nathan said unto David, Jehovah also has put away your sin; you shall not die." The prophet didn't say, "Now David wait a minute, God doesn't have a word for me yet. God's got to adjust His disposition towards you. He had been ready to zap you. You've been such a faithless disgraces as His child. Give God a little chance to sort out His emotions towards you and His disposition towards you." No. The Prophet said, the moment he heard the words "I have sinned", the 'Lord has put away your sin.' Why? God's forgiveness was pressing against His heart like water against a dam, and the moment the words were spoken, "I have sinned," the dam burst and the free gracious forgiveness of God came cascading down upon David's head and into his heart.

That's God's disposition to His children, even when they are wretchedly miserably backslidden. What's God's disposition toward you? He yearns to forgive you. He's the God of **Hosea** who said, in **14:2, 1** "O Israel, return unto Jehovah Your God; for You have fallen by your iniquity. **2** Take with you words, and return unto Jehovah: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and accept that which is good: so will we render as bullocks the offering of our lips. **3** Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, you are our gods; for in You the fatherless find mercy. **4** I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him. **5** I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall blossom as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon."

"Take with you words, and return . . . I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely." God says be like Me. I'm your Father and I want the family likeness to be seen in you. I'm the God Who maintains a disposition of forgiveness, even to those who don't seek My forgiveness, who don't want My forgiveness, who don't own where they need My forgiveness. That is the place to which God calls you and me. That's why He says in Luke

chapter 6, 'love your enemies, pray for them that the despitefully use you, do good to those that persecute you.' He goes on to say, 'be like your Father for He is kind and merciful, even to the evil and the unthankful.' You say that's a tall order. Yes it is. That's why this principle is vital to remember, **TOLERATE NOTHING LESS THAN THE GODLIKE DISPOSITION OF FORGIVENESS FILLING YOUR HEART BY THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

Are you persuaded by these Biblical texts? This is what you and I must desire and seek whenever we are the offended. If you're a child of God you have no choice. Are you convinced of that? If everything in you says, "Oh God, that's beyond me, that's above me, outside of what I can do; but Lord I see, it's what I must do. How, can I do that?"

Here's some good news for you. You don't just sit back and pray, "Oh God give me a godlike disposition of forgiveness no matter what anyone does to me." Don't just pray! The Bible calls you to do some putting off and putting on. We put off certain sins, and we put on certain graces. In the language of Philippians 2, we must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, for God is at work in us to will and to work. Consider these three directives. We are to experience nothing less than this godlike disposition of forgiveness, filling our hearts by the ministry of the Holy Spirit:

#1 – WE MUST CONSTANTLY REPUDIATE AND MORTIFY, EVERY AND ALL ATTITUDES, AND STATES OF HEART, CONTRARY TO THE DISPOSITION OF FORGIVENESS. [PUT OFF]

We must constantly [it's not something you do once for all] repudiate [refuse to welcome it as our friend] and mortify [that is, by the Holy Spirit, put it to death] [and what is it we are to repudiate and mortify constantly?] every [leave no exception] and all attitudes, and states of heart, contrary, to the disposition of forgiveness.

Where do we learn that? Here is disposition and attitude contrary to the Spirit of forgiveness #1. **Romans 12:18** *"If it be possible, as much as in you lies, be at peace with all men. [Not everybody's going to let you be at peace with them, so what do you do when some are not at peace with you, and they make themselves your enemy?] 19 Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place unto the wrath of God: for it is written, Vengeance belongs unto Me; I will recompense, says the Lord."*

Someone has made himself my enemy, has wronged me, has harmed me, it could be proven in a court of law, what

is to be my response? Wrongdoing will receive just retribution. That's a law of God's moral universe, and God is committed to that law. He said where vengeance, that is, punishment, for wrongdoing is due, I will give it, but it is I Who will give it. It's My business, not yours, so avenge not yourselves. Where does avenging oneself begin? Not with a hand that strikes a person; not with the mouth that slices another with words; not with the turned shoulder that ostracizes by body language; but it starts in the heart.

I've got a right to get you. If I only get you with my thoughts, then I've got a right to have my thoughts shoot arrows at you. If I can only get you with my words, then I can cut you to your face, or behind your back, but I'm going to get you. That's the spirit of vengeance. I have a right to get you for what you did to me. God says, 'That's not your job; it's Mine, so stop usurping My throne. Vengeance is Mine, and I will repay. Leave Me to do My job, and you do yours.' Do you want to know if you're doing it? See if you're able to do what the next verse says. **20** *But if your enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink: for in so doing you shall heap coals of fire upon his head. 21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

12:20 *But if your enemy hunger, feed him;* [instead of slicing him with your words, slice a piece of meat and put it in his belly] *if he thirst, give him to drink: for in so doing you shall heap coals of fire upon his head.* [It's not clear what that imagery means, the commentators debate it] **21** *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."* [Don't let them turn you into what they are.]

Would you by God's grace, when you are the offended, respond to that offense in a way that is pleasing to God? Then tolerate nothing less, then the godlike disposition of forgiveness filling your heart by the Ministry of the Spirit, and how can you do that? It begins by constantly repudiating and mortifying, every and all, attitudes and states of heart contrary to the disposition of forgiveness.

Bring before your mind's eye the person who has grievously and wickedly wronged you and put them right in front of you. Can you say if they were there, "I'd put their lights out. I'd chew them up with words," or can you say if they were there, "Forgiveness beats at the door of my heart and nothing would thrill me more than to open those doors and let the forgiveness flow down upon their head, without reservation." Until you can do that, you've got heart work to be done within you. We must not tolerate at any time, any disposition, attitude or state-of-

heart contrary to the disposition of forgiveness. **Romans 12:19** *"Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place unto the wrath of God: for it is written, Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord. 20 But if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. 21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."*

Another clear text pointing us in the same direction is **Proverbs 24:29. 28** *"Be not a witness against your neighbor without cause; and deceive not with your lips. 29 Say not, I will do so to him as he has done to me; I will render to the man according to his work."* That's vengeance.

Consider Ephesians 4:31. Notice that the injunction to be forgiving comes at the end of a string of exhortations. There is a logic in the order they are presented. **31** *"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you."*

Ephesians 4:31 *"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor [that would be the attitudes breaking out into actions and words, and railing –abusive speech. Let the dispositions that produce it and the actions they produce **BE PUT AWAY**. That's **THE NEGATIVE**] be put away from you, with all malice [every strand and impulse of ill will that would harm another –that's maliciousness. Let it all be put away]: 32 and [now **THE POSITIVE**] be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you."*

You will never be a forgiving man or woman, boy or girl, unless you are determined to constantly repudiate and mortify such things as bitterness, wrath, and anger. Do I have a "right" to enter into clamorous communication, railing, abusive speech; a "right" to nurse a spirit of malice? No! Let it all . . . let it all be put away from you. God's "all's" have significance. Until you and I say they will have significance in your own heart, you will never make progress in being a God-like offended man or woman, boy or girl.

Secondly, we must not only constantly repudiate and mortify every and all attitudes and states of heart contrary to the disposition of forgiveness, we must obey the "put on" dimension:

2 – WE MUST CONSTANTLY APPROPRIATE EVERY GRACE CONSISTENT WITH A DISPOSITION OF FORGIVENESS.

Having said, "Let these things be put away . . ." in verse 31 of Ephesians 4, the Apostle says in verse 32, "this is the putting on" –the appropriation of those graces that are productive of the spirit of forgiveness.

Ephesians: 4:32 *"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you."*

The only one who has a pattern of readiness and engagement in free, gracious, forgiveness of his brothers and sisters, is the one who is kind and tenderhearted.

It's an act of unkindness to be unwilling to forgive. It's hard heartedness that says, "No, that person's crossed the line. I will not, I cannot, I shall not forgive." That's a hard heart, so we must constantly appropriate the graces consistent with that disposition. Kindness. God is spoken of as being a kind God. 1 Peter 2:3. **Tender heartedness** literally means healthy bowels. Healthy viscera, with the concept that the seat of the emotions is not the heart, but the bowels, the entrails. It says have healthy entrails down in the depths of your being, where you feel irritation, anger, malice, ill will, in that very center of your being, let there be tenderness, healthy bowels, no rotten bacteria in the spiritual gut, poisoning the whole system, but healthy bowels, tenderhearted.

In Colossians 3, the emphasis is stronger as you compare this passage with Ephesians 4. On the second point of counsel: appropriating every grace consistent with the disposition of forgiveness. In Ephesians 4 Paul mentions just two graces, kindness and tender heartedness, but look at Colossians **3:12: 12** *"Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; 13 forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do you: 14 and above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also you were called in one body; and be ye thankful. 16 Let **THE WORD** of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God."*

Colossians 3:12 *"**PUT ON** therefore [dress yourself, that is, appropriate, in the *virtue of your union with Christ] as*

*God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; 13 forbearing one another, [and notice the crowning activity] and forgiving each other, [you won't be a forgiving man or woman, without PUTTING ON constantly a heart of compassion, kindness, loneliness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance. Then in verse 14 it says, *above all these things PUT ON love, which is the bond of perfectness.**

These are all manifestations of the fruit of the Spirit, which is love. God-like love. Spirit-wrought love. You say how in the world do I put them on? Where do I get them? The Scripture tells us of our Lord Jesus in **John 1:14** "*And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us* (and we beheld His glory –glory as of The Only Begotten from the Father) ***full of grace and truth.***"

All of these graces, in their fullness, are in Christ and we've been united to Christ. In union with Christ we can, by faith, appropriate to ourselves those graces so utterly foreign to us by nature, by temperament, past training, past experiences, and in terms of our remaining sin.

Thirdly, if we are going to keep this counsel, tolerating nothing less than a God-like disposition of forgiveness filling our hearts by the ministry of the Spirit, constant repudiation and mortification, constant appropriation, then:

#3 – THERE MUST BE CONSTANT REMEMBRANCE, OF THE WONDER AND THE MAGNITUDE OF OUR FORGIVENESS FROM GOD.

There must be a constant remembrance [constantly remind ourselves] of the wonder and magnitude of our forgiveness from God.

Ephesians 4:32 "*we are to forgive one another, even as God...*" God. Infinite, Eternal, Unchangeable in His Being, Holiness, Wisdom, Power, Goodness and Truth. This God has, in Christ, forgiven us!

Remember the parable of the unjust servant. The man was forgiven his millions, but he grabbed his fellow servant by the throat and said give me my nickels and dimes or off to prison you go. Remember what Jesus said? Just as they took him and delivered him to the tormentors, so shall My Heavenly Father due to you, if you forgive not every man his brother . . . where? From the heart. It starts in the heart.

What's the teaching of that parable? That you can be forgiven and lose your forgiveness? Of course not. The teaching is, if you are not ready to forgive your fellow

man their nickels and dimes, you've never known the wonder and sweetness and the heart-melting, heartbreaking reality of being forgiven your millions. That's the teaching. If you are reluctant to forgive, it's a sure sign that you've never been overwhelmed, broken, enamored, infatuated, and swallowed up in the wonder of Almighty God. He could have cast you into hell except by pouring out His wrath upon His Son, and because of what Christ did, freely forgiving you, your millions, He didn't. So when a brother or sister comes, what should they find in you? They should find the disposition of one who can't forget that their millions of debt have been canceled. You're coming to me and asking that I might forgive you your nickel or dime – it's no big deal. Of course I can forgive your nickel and dime, Almighty God has forgiven my millions!

So what will keep us from that frame of mind? Just keep reminding yourself, I've been forgiven my millions by the Infinite, Eternal, Unchangeable, Holy, Just God of the universe. I'm a sinner, a creature, and all I'm asked to do is to extend a little debt-canceling of nickels and dimes to a fellow creature and sinner. The incongruity of a man saying, "Yes, I'm forgiven. I'm a Christian. Jesus has taken my sins away, but you make sure you give me your nickel and dime or I'll grab you by the throat. I'll put you in the prison of alienation."

When someone seeks your forgiveness, how in the world can you justify saying daily, "I'm a sinner who's been forgiven millions," and do anything other than say, "I freely forgive your nickels and dimes." Either you've never known the sweetness of forgiveness and you are self deceived, or it's been a long time since you've baptized your spirit in a long look at Gethsemane and looked at your Savior travailing in sweat drops of blood as He faces the abyss of abandonment. My Savior with all His Holy courage that could stare down His enemies who were determined to stone Him and say, "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" Now He trembles and staggers on the ground, sweating blood, bursting capillaries in His brow, 'Oh My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass.' Cowardice? No! He faced the reality of **WHAT IT WOULD COST HIM TO CANCEL YOUR MILLIONS AND MY MILLIONS**. If you're finding difficulty canceling nickels and dimes, you better go to Gethsemane and stay there for a while, a long while. *Cut out some of your entertainment time* and take a good long look. Go to Golgotha and see His face that looked like that of a fighter who'd been beaten for 15 rounds, with welts and bruises, crown of thorns, pierced hands,

pierced feet, the darkened heavens, the mysterious cry "My God, My God, why have You abandoned Me?"

WHY? That we might have our millions forgiven. That's why. You say that you're saved by One Who went into that, and you've got your fellow believer (your husband, your wife, your kids, your neighbor, somebody else) by the throat – "give me my nickels and my dimes." No. You can't do it. No. Whatever anyone else has done to you pales into insignificance when we think of what our sins did to Him. What my sins did to Him –and He's freely forgiven me! **SOAK YOUR SOUL** in those realities and you'll almost beg somebody to come and ask you to forgive them so you'll have the exquisite joy of saying, "It's my joy! It's my privilege! I'm a forgiven sinner. I freely forgive you, because I am a forgiven person!"

Those are our words of counsel with three dimensions of how. If I am to tolerate nothing less than the God-like disposition of forgiveness filling my heart by the ministry of the Spirit and know I must do it, how do I do it?

- Constant repudiation and mortification
- Constant appropriation
- Constant remembrance

APPLICATION

TO THOSE IN CHRIST

4 QUESTIONS:

I.) WHEN YOU ARE SINNED AGAINST, DOES THAT OFFENSE FIND YOU TOLERATING NOTHING LESS THEN A GODLIKE DISPOSITION OF FORGIVENESS?

Filling your heart by the ministry of the Spirit; in other words, whether it's your wife, who you feel has really offended you by what she said or did or didn't do, a fellow believer who walked by and you thought they ignored you, whatever it is, when that offense *registers in your moral consciousness, does it register in the mind and heart of a man or a woman who instinctively says, "However I react to that offense, I cannot, I must not, I shall not, tolerate any disposition taking root in my heart that is contrary to the spirit of forgiveness." Is that what offenses find when they strike you? Is that a nonnegotiable with you? In the theater of your own consciousness, in the presence of Almighty God, can you say that offenses find you with a well-furnished, gospel-soaked forgiving heart? If you think it does, don't be surprised if God puts you to the test. **(2)**

When offenses register in your moral consciousness, what kind of heart do those offenses find?

The second question is:

II.) IF AND WHEN THE OFFENDER COMES TO YOU, OWNING THEIR SIN AND SEEKING FORGIVENESS, DOES THE OFFENDER FIND IN YOU A DISPOSITION READY AND QUICK TO FORGIVE?

Do you forgive freely and graciously as God in Christ forgives you? In other words when someone comes to you saying, "I really believe I sinned against you in doing . . ." (whatever it is) do they find you quick, ready to forgive? Do they find you having nothing but extended forgiveness? Do they come to someone who's heart is so furnished with the spirit of forgiveness that all they need to do is to lightly tap it with the words of acknowledgment of sin and seeking forgiveness and boom! – your heart, like God's, opens up and says, 'O my brother, my sister, I forgive you.' Or are you one that they have to sneak up on and work on for a while? Does anyone have to go to work on you? Or is the Holy Spirit constantly at work on you, creating in you a disposition of forgiveness? Another question:

III.) WHEN YOU GO TO FULFILL THE COMMAND OF MATTHEW 18, "IF YOUR BROTHER SIN AGAINST YOU GO, TELL HIM HIS FAULT BETWEEN YOU AND HIM ALONE." WHEN YOU GO TO FULFILL THE COMMAND, LUKE 17:3 "IF YOUR BROTHER SIN AGAINST YOU REBUKE HIM, IF HE REPENT FORGIVEN HIM." WHEN YOU GO TO FULFILL THOSE INJUNCTIONS, DO YOU GO WITH A DISPOSITION LONGING TO FORGIVE, FLOODING YOUR HEART, READY TO BURST UPON THE HEAD OF THE OFFENDER WITH UNMISTAKABLE SPONTANEITY AND JOY?

Or do you go almost hoping you can't get them to own their sin because then you think you've got a right to nurse your grudge or alienation. "They wouldn't own their sin. I rebuked them but they wouldn't repent..." Or do you go earnestly longing that you'll gain your brother or your sister; that your lovingly, wise, judiciously-framed rebuke, showing them their sin, will result in a wonderful expression and conferral of gospel forgiveness. Remember, Jesus expects this to be the prevailing disposition of the heart, so much so . . . remember Luke 17:4 and Matthew 18:21 – 22? Remember what they say? "And if he turn to you seven times in the day saying, I repent, you shall forgive him." Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Till 7x's? The Lord said no, till 70x7. What's the Lord saying? He's saying the disposition of forgiveness has no markers, it has no scorecard. It's like God's disposition. It is a bottomless, shoreless, ocean of divine disposition to forgive, and God says I'm going to put that ocean in you. Don't keep a

scorecard. That's the point. The Lord doesn't want us to get caught up in a numbers game. Does he mean literally 70x7? No. What He's saying is, no matter how many times I am sinned against, when someone acknowledges the sin [repentance is a necessary part of the bilateral transaction], they are to find me, without exception, responding with **a disposition of readiness** to forgive. You say this is hard stuff? I didn't write it.

Another question to consider:

IV.) IS THERE ANYONE, CONCERNING WHOM, FOR ANY OFFENSE WHATEVER, YOU HAVE SAID, I CAN NEVER FORGIVE HIM? –NOT IN THE LIGHT OF WHAT HE DID TO ME, SHE DID TO ME.

I may be speaking to someone who has a deep, dark secret going back to your early years, where there was wicked, shameful, horrific, emotional abuse, or even sexual abuse, and you've carried this with you for years, this disposition. And you say, "I don't care what that person ever does or ever says, I cannot and I will not ever forgive them." Anyone here? Are you sitting there right now saying, "I was afraid that question might be asked." My friend, if you were afraid, you should be thankful, because that disposition can only poison your soul and do far more harm to you than the abuse itself. You've got to give yourself no rest until you can say by the grace of God, **"If God would be pleased to bring that person to repentance,"** it would be my joy to smother them with the assurance of my forgiveness.

I'm **NOT** telling you that you unconditionally forgive them, regardless of whether they own the sin. That tyrannical doctrine is laid upon people's consciences all over the country and it's not biblical. For an adult woman to go to a father [unsaved?] who abused her sexually as a child, who has no sense of grief or remorse and say, "I unconditionally forgive you." For what? But to be able to look him straight in the eye and say, "Dad, though left to myself I want to see you dead, but Almighty God has made a new creature of me and I have been forgiven my millions and I long for you to know the forgiveness of your millions, and my disposition to you is but a faint reflection of the disposition of God, Who is good and ready to forgive. And dad, I want to assure you, if you own your sin, you will find me quick and ready, for Christ's sake, to forgive you." Is there someone about whom you said, "I can never, I will not, I cannot, it's cruel of God to ask me ever to forgive them." I ask you, *was Golgotha and Gethsemane neat and tidy? or were they cruel?

TO THOSE NOT IN CHRIST

Some of you are not Christians and you're sitting there saying, "If that is what it means to be a Christian, forget it. How can anybody live like that? That is so contrary, to everything that I am, and all that I know of myself, how in the world can I ever respond to wrong doings that way? I couldn't live that way." My friend, if you've come to recognize that the life to which a believer is called, he can't live until he is a believer, until you're in Christ, may be the first step to your salvation. The **graces** of forgiveness, kindness and tender-heartedness that flow into us **from our union with Christ**. 'Without Me,' Jesus said, 'you can do nothing.' You are locked into the prison house of your bitterness, your unforgiveness; your vindictiveness; your vengeful, revengeful, malicious spirit—isn't that a horrible prison house you're living in? Aren't you weary of it? Wouldn't you like to wake up some morning and say, "The God of heaven has wiped away all my sins, and there is nothing any creature can do to me to make me stew in the bitterness and rancor of unforgiveness!" Wouldn't you like that kind of freedom? That's what God offers you in Christ when He said, "Come to Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden." **Few things are a greater burden than a disposition of unforgiveness.** What a horrible thing. Yes, you've been wronged, really wronged, badly wronged. Yes. I know. But you labor under that disposition, "I will not forgive. I cannot forgive. How can I ever forgive? It's wrong for God to expect me to forgive." *Was it right for God to heap the punishment of our sins upon Christ? Was it right for Him to be shrouded in darkness, plunged into the agony of Gethsemane and Golgotha? No, it was all of grace. And that grace can envelop you, take you in, and scour your heart of all of that vengeful, vindictive, unforgiving spirit, and overwhelm you with the wonder of God's forgiveness in Christ. God can set you free and send you out of this place and you'll understand Jesus' words, when He said, "Come to Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me for I am meek and lowly of heart and you shall find **rest to your souls**." It's a wonderful thing to be under Jesus yoke. You may be saying that's an impossible life. Yes, it is outside of Christ. In Christ you can say with Paul, "I can do all things through Him, Who strengthens me."

It's great to be able to forgive. It's nice to know that there's nobody on earth with whom you've got to settle the score or with whom you've got to get even with. Do you know that in your own heart?

Have dealings with God and go to Him asking for forgiveness of your sins on the basis of what His Son did. Ask Him to baptize you in the Holy Spirit, to give you the disposition of forgiveness and the freedom that goes with it. These are the kind of things that can change a marriage relationship, a society, a church. Be free!

(1) Do a search on the relationship to “put on,” “put off,” in the Word.

Notice the soul is to be steeped in the Word along with the put on, put off motifs. Do you want to put on, put off? Then you must lay your idols on the table and sacrificially get into the Word.

Colossians 3:1 “If then you were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. **2** Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. **3** For you died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. **4** When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory. **5** Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry; **6** for which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience: **7** wherein ye also once walked, when ye lived in these things; **3:8** but now do ye also put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth: **9** lie not one to another; seeing that you have put off the old man with his doings, **10** and have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him: **11** where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all. **12** Put on therefore, [dress yourself with, appropriate in the virtue of your union with Christ] as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; **13** forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye: **14** and above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness. **15** And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also ye were called in one body; and be ye thankful. **16** Let THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU RICHLY: in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God.”

1 Peter 2:1 Putting away therefore all wickedness, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, **2** as newborn babes, LONG FOR THE SPIRITUAL MILK which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation; **3** if ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious: **4** unto whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, **5** ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

I'm tired so I'll bath my soul in reality. No. I'll watch TV, talking about disproportionate TV watching or other wastes of time.

Disproportionate means add up the hours at the end of the month of all the time spent on entertainment or hobbies, working out, or any other diversion, and then add up your time in the Word and prayer.

To the person who says, I need marriage counseling or I'm depressed, my first question after asking how much sleep are you getting, what's your nutrition and work out habits like, my question would be is how

much time are you spending in the Word? Is it primary and all else is secondary to your steady diet of entertainment?????

(2) Page 18

Little did I know, that in preparing to preach these things today, God would throw me and my wife, into one of the most severe tests of this very principle that we have known in our 70 years of sojourn. If I were hypocrite enough to stand up here and preach this without having reckoned with the issue, it would not surprise me if God would strike me dumb or dead.

Random

Growth in the Christian life is more like a war or weeding a garden. It's wearying, its constant, its life or death, its stop and you loose ground. Don't confuse the storms of life coming with growth. The storms will come if you are in the Word or not. Tribulation will come. “I don't see any difference, if I'm in the Word storms come, if I'm not in the word that much storms come, so therefore, I'll minimize the Word.” NO!

Remember His warning to the luke warm. How about all those, “Don't be deceived” warnings. Strive to enter in the narrow gate. Hunger and thirst after.... Either your killing sin or its killing you. Either you're weeding the garden or it gets over run.

Am I reading my Bible correctly? Am I understanding Its in balance? What piece of the puzzle am I missing? If I need the whole Bible, if there is no master key to the Christian life, isn't this an urgent matter?

Don't be deceived. Look at the church in general during this time in Western Civilization and to a high degree, all's it is, is deceived. How so you ask??? You can't be reading your Bible and good books and listening to good messages if your asking that question. You can't be under a sound ministry and ask that question because the watchmen in a sound ministry would be shouting about enemies without and within the church. What about psychology? Women's roles? What's the Gospel? Are we living in the Gospel every day? Sound theology is necessary, but prayer and growth in likeness to Christ is paramount. I know plenty of people who can talk theology, yet they are so full of themselves... We should be getting more human in the true sense of the word. The only way I don't get overcome but rather overcome is by the Lamp for my feet and the Light for my path. Jesus says, “Come unto Me and drink.” Be a heavy drinker!!! Forms of worship? Is the Scripture sufficient? The answer is no, if you don't use it as a weapon and a guide. The Holy Spirit isn't going to bless spiritual indifference and spiritual laziness. Ask guys who come back from combat what laziness and indifference gets them.