

## Becoming Like Jesus – Pt. 5 – Forbearing, Forgiving, Love

### INTRODUCTION:

1. In Colossians 3 Paul seeks to show what living as a Christian, or living like Jesus, should look like.
2. So far we have seen how:
  - A. (3:1-4) Those who have been raised with Christ are to seek the things above and refuse to get caught up in the things this world treasures.
  - B. (3:5-11) We must put to death immorality as well as ungodly treatment of others because we have put on a new self that is being renewed in the knowledge of Christ.
  - C. (3:12-15) Because God has chosen us, made us holy, and loves us, we are to put on new clothing, or a new way of living, that comes from God and is befitting of our honored position.
    - i. We first considered the clothing of compassion and kindness, which mimics our Lord who is “full of compassion” (Jas. 5:11) and shown us great kindness in saving us (Tit. 3:3-7).
    - ii. We next considered the Christ-like clothing of humility, gentleness, and patience and their value in maintaining godly relationships with one another.
3. Today I want us to focus on the clothing, or traits, we must put on found in Colossians 3:13-14, which are forbearance, forgiveness, and love, all of which are vital to the unity of the local church and the body of Christ in general.

### BODY:

#### **I. Put on...forbearance (3:13)**

- A. **Defined:** (*anechomenoi*) – to put up with, to bear with, to endure patiently, to tolerate (**Strong’s; Thayer; Mounce; BDAG**)
  1. Words like “put up with,” “endure,” and “tolerate” might give us the wrong idea.
    - a. For, I can “tolerate” someone while still feeling frustration or resentment for their faults, or while ignoring that person or their faults altogether.
    - b. That, however, is not biblical forbearance.
  2. Biblical forbearance requires that we “bear with” someone without being provoked to act or think in an unkind way, and with the goal of helping that person grow beyond his/her faults.
- B. So, forbearance is needed when:
  1. A fellow saint is weak or ignorant of the truth and its demands on his/her life.
    - a. This person may be a spiritual infant or just weak despite many years of service.
    - b. Yet, if they are willing to continue to seek the Lord, we must show restraint, offering instead our loving care and direction to help them achieve this end and grow.
    - c. Though I have come to understand how difficult forbearance can be, it becomes much easier when we are mindful of our own spiritual imperfections (Jas. 2:12-13 – “So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. <sup>13</sup> **For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy**; mercy triumphs over judgment.”).
  2. A brother who has sinned repents and is attempting to re-enter the fold of God.
    - a. A forbearing Christian will realize that Satan’s hold is not easily broken, and that mistakes will likely be made, sometimes requiring our help to clean up the mess.
    - b. A forbearing Christian will stay close enough to give the needed support and guidance without being domineering and without critiquing that person’s every move.
  3. A fellow believer intentionally seeks to harm you, whether it be by hurtful words, false accusations, etc., which, again, is extremely difficult!
    - a. When that day comes, you can choose to retaliate directly and in kind with hurtful words or actions as do the worldly, but that will bring sin upon you.
    - b. Or you can choose to retaliate indirectly by ignoring or excluding them, and even working toward others doing the same. But, that too will bring sin upon you.
    - c. Or you can do as did Jesus by showing forbearance in turning the other cheek (Matt. 5:39), while applying His words in Romans 12:12 which say, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”
- C. So, we need to grow in the virtuous trait of forbearance.

1. For, God shows us great forbearance, or longsuffering, as He leads us to repentance (Rom. 2:4 – “Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?”).
2. Though we might become discouraged due to the difficulty of applying the trait properly and consistently, we must remember that Christ, who endured all the abuse Satan could throw at Him without sin, lives in us (Gal. 2:20 – “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”).
  - a. If we remember Christ is living in us, what a difference that can and will make!
  - b. For, I do not have to do this alone.

## II. Put on...forgiveness (3:13)

- A. Defined: (*χαρίζομαι, charizomai*) to give, grant, bestow as a kind favor, to forgive; to show oneself gracious, kind, benevolent, to graciously restore one to another (**Strong; Mounce; BDAG; Thayer**)
  1. From these definitions we should see forgiveness as something we **choose to give, or grant, or bestow**, upon someone **with the goal of restoration**.
  2. It is significant that this word is derived from the word *charis* translated “grace,” as in *God’s grace*, which should help color our understanding of this word and what it demands of us.
- B. We see the connection to grace because we must grant forgiveness “just as the Lord forgave you.”
  1. So, the grace we have received from God must be shown to others.
    - a. This means forgiving without harboring resentment or keeping an account (Heb. 8:12 – “For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and **I will remember their sins no more.**”).
    - b. That may sound entirely too difficult, but as Paul said in Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things **through Him** who strengthens me.”
  2. Forgiving as we have been forgiven is vital to our salvation.
    - a. Jesus made this clear in the model pray of the sermon on the mount (Matt. 6:12, 14-15 – “And forgive us our debts, **as we also have forgiven our debtors...**”<sup>14</sup> For **if you forgive others** for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. <sup>15</sup> **But if you do not forgive others**, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.”).
    - b. He made it clear in his parable of the slave called **wicked** because he gave no forgiveness when he had been forgiven much (Matt. 18:32-35 – “Then summoning him, his lord said to him, ‘**You wicked slave**, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.’”<sup>33</sup> Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?’”<sup>34</sup> And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. <sup>35</sup> My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.”).
- C. Forgiveness is required when one has a **complaint** against his/her fellow Christian.
  1. Because the passage does not say whether this complaint is justified or not likely indicates that the point is **to have a forgiving spirit**.
  2. But to properly apply that forgiving spirit, we need to consider the Lord’s words concerning how to deal with those complaints.
    - a. Jesus taught if you know your brother has a complaint against you, you must go to him seeking reconciliation (Mat. 5:23-24 – “Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.”).
      - i. Note how forgiveness and reconciliation are given top priority.
      - ii. Pride may try to keep us from doing this, or we may just want to ignore such problems in the hope that they will go away, but we cannot do so without sin.
    - b. Jesus commanded that if you have a complaint against your brother, you are to go and seek reconciliation (Matt. 18:15-17 – “If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in

private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. <sup>16</sup> But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. <sup>17</sup> If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”).

- i. Note how, as before, the fault is not to be ignored, but dealt with promptly.
- ii. And note that **repentance** is the intended goal so that reconciliation may follow. For, if the offending brother does not listen and refuses to repent, witnesses must be taken. If that does not work, the matter must be brought before the church. And if that does not work, the unrepentant brother is to be marked and withdrawn from.
- iii. So, here we see that forgiveness leading to reconciliation is a very serious matter as well as a two-way street.
  - 1) The **offended** brother must truly desire reconciliation and be ready to **forgive** to gain it, while the **offender** must truly desire reconciliation and be willing to **admit guilt** and **repent** to gain it.
  - 2) Jesus said it this way (Luke 17:3-4 – “Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. <sup>4</sup> And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ forgive him.”).

### III. Put on...love (3:14)

- A. It is significant that *above*, *beyond*, or *over* all these previous traits, we must put on love because it is the perfect, or complete, bond of unity.
  1. Some suggest Paul sees love here like a coat that is worn over all one’s other clothing, or godly traits, binding them together to work for the complete, or perfect, unity of the body.
  2. Others see this as saying love is what generates compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience; forbearance, and forgiveness leading to perfect unity.
  3. Either way, it is only when we are willing to love that we, as sinners saved by grace, will remain bound together in true unity (1 Pet. 4:8 – “Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.”).
- B. What kind of love is God demanding here?
  1. **Defined:** (ἀγάπη, agapē) affection, benevolence; brotherly love, good will, generosity, kindly concern; love (**Strong; Thayer, Mounce, BDAG**)
  2. When we read these definitions we can get the wrong idea that agape love is generic with no specific meaning or application. But that would be false.
  3. For, agape’s biblical use is quite *unique*.
    - a. For, although the Greek’s use of it was colorless and without any real depth of meaning or nuance, its adoption and use by the Spirit gave it a unique and specific meaning that infinitely surpassed all other words for love.
    - b. That is because its biblical meaning comes not from the Greeks, but from God’s unique love, when the Greeks had no word to describe (1 John 4:9-10 – “In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. **In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**”).
    - c. Therefore, we must understand biblical love from the standpoint of God’s sacrificial action, His *choosing to do what is best for us at great cost to Himself, though we are undeserving* (Rom 5:5-8 – “Now hope does not disappoint, because the **love of God has been poured out** in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. For when we were still **without strength**, in due time **Christ died for the ungodly**. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. **But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**”).
    - d. Therefore, agape love is a choice, a product of the mind not the emotions—a *choosing* to do what is best even for those who may be contrary and undeserving.
- C. As a result of God’s love toward us, we are to love others (Eph. 5:1-2 – “Therefore be **imitators**

**of God**, as beloved children; <sup>2</sup> and **walk in love**, just as Christ also loved you and **gave Himself up for us**, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”).

1. As with these other traits, a willingness to show agape love is vital to our salvation (1 John 3:14-15 – “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. <sup>15</sup> Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”).
2. This love is to be broadly applied.
  - a. It is to be shown in our attitude and actions toward our brethren (1 John 3:16 – “We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”).
  - b. It must be shown in the marriage relationships (Eph. 5:25, 28-29 – “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, . . . <sup>28</sup> So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; <sup>29</sup> for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church”).
  - c. Because it comes from the mind, not the emotions, we must show agape love even to our enemies (Matt. 5:43-45, 48 – “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ <sup>44</sup> But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup> so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”).
3. So again, will adding and applying this trait be difficult? Yes!, . . . just like the other two. But we must never forget that we experience this same love from God daily, though we once made ourselves His enemy by our sinful rebellion and wicked deeds!

#### CONCLUSION:

1. If you seek to be like Jesus, I hope you can see the importance of wearing these traits in your daily life.
2. Without them we will not continue as a faithful church nor in biblical unity.
3. For, I know that the good things happening here have not escaped Satan’s eyes. And he will do his very worst to destroy it all.
4. So, I urge you, if you are not a Christian or if you have not been living faithfully to Christ, that you will appreciate the Lord’s . . .
  - A. **Forbearance** shown you in allowing you to live and enjoy its wonders . . . despite your sin.
  - B. **Love** shown to you in His willingness to sacrifice Jesus, His Son, on the cross that you might be saved from your sins.
  - C. **Forgiveness** that he offers you—forgiveness that will wipe away your every sin, making you pure and holy and giving to you hope of eternal life.
5. If you are lost and hurting in your sin, will you come to Jesus today?