



Session 6- Forgiveness Over Resentment

Colossians 3:5-13; Ephesians 4:25-32

3/31/2019

MAIN POINT

Biblical forgiveness always starts with a look in the mirror. It doesn't start with the wrong that was done to me; it starts with the wrongs that I have done to others. It asks, "What have I done and how have I been forgiven?" If we ever want to live light, we must choose to offer that same kind of forgiveness to others.

INTRODUCTION

Share a story about a time when you held a grudge that now seems silly. Why did you feel like your grudge was appropriate at the time?

Brainstorm a list of some of the reasons why it is so hard to forgive people. Which of the things on the list seem like excuses to avoid practicing forgiveness?

Transition: Every one of us has a heart prone to not forgive. We hold grudges, we build up offenses against other people, we sweep things under the rug, or we write people out of our lives forever. Rarely do we do the hard work of putting on real forgiveness, especially as a character trait that we try to model consistently. Paul included forgiveness in his list of godly character traits that children of God must put on, and he based that trait on the very forgiveness of God toward us, which can't be argued with.

UNDERSTANDING

Have a volunteer read Colossians 3:5-13.

⁵ Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶ Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.^[b] ⁷ You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. ⁸ But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁹ Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its

Creator.¹¹ Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

¹² Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

When Paul calls us to accept one another, he means that Christians are to go beyond quiet resignation positively to forgive whatever grievances they may have against one another. Believers have been fully forgiven by Christ (Col. 2:13-14), and the forgiven are obligated to become forgivers. The standard for this forgiveness is Christ Himself. Paul made this command especially clear in another of his letters.

What are the things in verses 5-9 the list of things that we are to “put off”? What are the things in verses 10-13 the things that we are to “put on”? Why do we hold on to things we are to put off versus living the new life for Christ?

What stands out to you about the phrases Paul used to describe relationships in Colossians 3:13?

What do you understand “accepting one another” to mean, and how is it connected to forgiveness? Why is accepting someone else, despite their behavior, an essential element of forgiveness?

Forgiveness does not come naturally to us. It must be taught, learned, and accepted. For Christians, we have no option but to forgive if we wish to live faithfully to Jesus Christ. It's important to remember as well that forgiveness is not something that we give to ourselves, forgiven is a part of what we are called as children of God. Therefore, we can live in freedom from our past sins because of what Christ did at the cross and in the resurrection! Thus, we are called to go and show others forgiveness.

How does Paul's call to forgiveness in this verse help you understand why this is an important trait for Christians to model?

Paul's words to us here come in the form of a command. Why do we treat forgiveness as something we have the choice to do or not do? Do Christians really have that choice? Explain.

What are we to do if we have a complaint with someone else? How does that stand in contrast to the way you typically respond if you have a complaint against someone?

Transition: Paul shows here how unforgiveness arises from sin. We must remember that when we were sinful, God forgave us and gave Himself for us. Unforgiveness does not honor Jesus, nor your brothers and sisters in Christ. Let's look at another example of where Paul helps us to see the call to forgive.

Sermon Notes:

Have a volunteer read Ephesians 4:25-29.

²⁵ Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ²⁶ “In your anger do not sin”^[d]: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold. ²⁸ Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

In verses 25-32, Paul gave several commands regarding our external actions and internal attitudes that reflect back to his charge in Ephesians 4:1 to “live a life worthy” of our calling as Christians. Once we enter into a relationship with Jesus at salvation, we are called to live like Him, and our lives are committed to growing in faith and becoming holy, like Christ and set apart from the world.

Take each principle in verses 25-28 one at a time (or choose a few to focus on) and discuss: (1) What we are to put off; (2) what we are to put on; (3) the reason we are to put on that quality.

When might we be tempted to exhibit one of these negative qualities? How can we demonstrate the positive instead?

What does it look like to put off falsehood?

We believers are to put off falsehood as a filthy garment and replace it with truthful speech. After all, we are all members of one body, literally, “we are members of one another.” The fabric of unity within the body of Christ is woven with mutual love, trust, and respect. Lies destroy trust and respect and erode love. Believers should be forthright and honest in what they say at home, at church, at work, and at play. Remember, Satan is the “father of lies” (John 8:44).

Read verse 29 again. **When might we be tempted to exhibit negative or corrupting talk? How can we demonstrate affirming speech instead?**

How might others lead us to this corrupting talk without us even realizing it?

You’ve heard it said that “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Paul would heartily disagree with that adage. The truth is that words are powerful, and they can

either build others up or tear them down. Our culture doesn't always promote language that encourages and edifies.

What are some practical ways we can use our words to build others up?

How does positive speech give grace to those who hear?

Transition: As believers who are walking in a manner different from that of the world, we can seek to help by our speech rather than to hurt. When this happens, we are giving evidence that God's grace has succeeded in our own lives and that we are actively extending grace to those who hear us speak. For our final section of Scripture, we will see how we can truly demonstrate the gospel by how we forgive.

Sermon Notes:

Have a volunteer read Ephesians 4:30-32.

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

How do our relationships with others reflect a different way of life from the rest of the world? Give specific examples of actions in those relationships that grieve and please God.

In verse 30, Paul challenged his readers to understand that God's Spirit grieves when we express hostility to others, in attitude, speech, or actions. Kind means caring or showing love practically. Compassionate refers to being moved on one's insides in response to a need and then acting. Forgiving is literally "acting with grace," and forgiving one another is certainly one of the best ways to extend undeserved favor. Paul pointed out specifically that this is a God-like quality. Because He forgave ... in Christ, we are to extend forgiveness to others.

According to Ephesians 4:31, what are the wicked ways that grieve Him?

What are believers to do with those sinful attitudes and actions?

Discuss what Paul might mean by the terms kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving in verse 32.

How are each of these terms a reflection of God's love for us?

What are the positive and/or negative motivations that prompt us to walk or live a Christian life? According to verse 32, what should be the primary motivation?

Sermon Notes:

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How does today's text affect the way you view yourself? Others? In light of that different view and God's calling, how will your actions toward people change? What is a baggage you are carrying in your life that you need to be set free from?

What are some practical ways we can remember God's great gift of forgiveness daily? How might those daily reminders re-frame our attitudes, words, and actions toward people who may be hard to forgive?

As a group and a church, how can we demonstrate together a true passion for God and a passion for others through the ways we love and forgive people?