

“Forgiving is a Behavior Not an Emotion”

By

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Text: Ephesians 4:31-32

31 *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:*

32 *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

Introduction:

What does it mean to say, “I forgive you?” Charlie Kirk’s widow, following Charlie’s assassination, went on National TV and declared she had forgiven the assassin. I wondered why. He had not asked for forgiveness or even acknowledged that he was the one who killed Charlie, why would she tell the world, “I forgive him.”

I frequently hear Christians announce forgiveness for individuals who have wronged them, even though such individuals have neither confessed the wrong nor asked for forgiveness. Many of them say, “That’s what Christians are supposed to do.” But is it? Does God forgive us when we have not acknowledged a wrong or requested forgiveness?

I John 1:9 says, *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

Forgiveness, as is frequently interpreted in the Bible, is said to mean to release a person from the debt of sin. It is not to be misunderstood to be ignoring a person’s wrongs but rather it is to respond to such behavior in grace to allow for reconciliation. Forgiveness is the core of the biblical message, and the foundation of God’s redemptive plan for humanity. Although forgiveness is not rooted in emotion, one’s emotions can certainly be affected by it or the lack thereof.

God describes mercy and forgiveness throughout the Old Testament and its identification with the word grace is the central teaching of the New Testament. Without forgiveness from God there’s no reconciliation with the Father.

The prominent Hebrew word translated *“forgiveness”* is *“nasa”* which means *“to lift,” “carry away,”* or *“remove.”* However, the Hebrew word *“salah”* is also used in some

passages to emphasize the aspect of “**pardoning.**” In the Greek of the New Testament the major word is “**charizomai**” which is built on the Greek word “**Charis**” the Greek word “**grace.**” But the Greek word “**aphesis,**” which means “**release**” or “**remission,**” is used to describe the result of forgiveness. A popular English definition of forgiveness is to stop blaming or being mad at a person for something that person has done and not to punish them for the wrong. However, the biblical concept may be summarized in the word “**grace.**”

Understanding the grace of God produces tremendous peace in the life of the Believer. As we comprehend the reality of God’s treatment of the believer in grace, we develop a peace that is beyond our human comprehension. Orientation to grace reveals our acquisition of God’s Righteousness At Christ’s Expense for Salvation. We realize we have God’s Resources At Christ’s Expense enabling us to live the Christian life. And, we have the assurance of God’s Realm At Christ’s Expense for eternity. These realities provide a framework of doctrine for peace and joy.

But it is our willingness to treat others in grace that produces a relaxed mental attitude resulting in unspeakable and unbroken joy, and forgiveness is the expression of that grace.

Our study here is designed to assist us in applying the concepts of grace to others.

I. The Challenge Of The Text: Ephesians 4:31-32

31 *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:*

32 *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

A. We Are Not Commanded To Put These Things Away - But To Allow The Holy Spirit To Put Them Away From Us.

Verse 31 *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:*

“*Let all....*” (arthetoh) - **allow all...**

This is an imperative, aorist, passive, verb which is a command to allow these things to be put away - we don’t put them away - we allow them to be put away. The Holy Spirit in control of our life puts these things away.

bitterness, (pikria) - **bitter hatred...**

This is not just hatred (refusing to honor the claim of a person) - but this word carries with it an emotion of bitterness leaving the taste of gall in one’s mouth.

This is the only masculine noun in this list. The masculine gender identifies the action is initiated by the subject, while *wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking,* and *malice* are all feminine which means they are a response. Thus “bitterness” is initiated by the individual and that sets to stage for him to respond with wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking and responses.

wrath, (orge) - anger settled in the mind with a view of taking revenge...

This word identifies anger that is impulsive (Acting impulsive results in one’s failure to view the circumstance from a divine perspective and react based on one’s natural disposition to sin.) This Greek word refers to mental anguish that seeks revenge.

anger, (thumos) - outward manifestation of fierceness...

This word identifies an emotional anger that is settled in one’s soul and as a feminine noun is a response associated with *bitterness*.

clamour, (krague) - shouting in a verbal quarrel...

This word is also a feminine noun and identifies the emotional raising of one’s voice as a response associated with *bitterness*.

evil speaking (blasphemia) – speech which is designed to injure...

This word is also a feminine noun and identifies a response associated to *bitterness*.

Bitterness is a mental attitude sin which is at the root of responses of wrath, anger, clamour, and injurious speech. *Bitterness* produces *anger, clamour,* and *evil speaking*.

Let...these things be put away from you, with all malice: This is an aorist, passive, imperative which means we are commanded to allow the Holy Spirit to remove these things from our behavior. The use of the Greek preposition “*sou*” says, *along with all malice.* Literally, *along with all evil.*

The Holy Spirit will remove these things if we grant Him permission with our freewill. You can see we are back to the basic problem of attempting to effectively Live The Christian Life. It always comes back to our freewill.

Then in verse 32 of our text we are commanded to participate with the Holy spirit in becoming *kind and tenderhearted in forgiving one another.*

B. We Are Commanded To Participate In:

Verse 32: *Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

Be ye (ginesthe) - Participate in becoming something you were not before...

This is an imperative, present tense, middle voice, verb which means we are to participate in the action of becoming something we previously were not. That behavior is described in two words ***“kind”*** and ***“tenderhearted.”***

The ***“others”*** that we are to have this grace orientation toward is from the Greek word ***“allaelous”*** which means, **others of the same kind** – other believers.

The Middle Voice describes our participation in becoming ***kind*** and ***tenderhearted*** toward others. Our participation is with the Holy Spirit – operating in the sphere of fellowship in which the Holy Spirit has control of our life. “The Spirit Controlled Life” enables us to develop the Spiritual Maturity required to become ***kind*** and ***tenderhearted***. We just concluded a series on Living The Christian Life and examined the techniques for developing the Spirit Controlled Life and developing Spiritual Maturity. Those are the techniques we need along with developing the Faith/Rest Life to become ***“kind”*** and ***“tenderhearted.”***

kind (chraestoi) **manifesting a proper orientation to grace.**

This is the predicate nominative of the masculine plural adjective describing the proper manifestation of grace which is characterized by kindness.

You may ask why it matters that this word is an adjective. It matters because every detail of Scripture is divinely inspired (Matthew 5:18), and grammar helps us understand that inspired meaning. Here, the predicate nominative adjective describes the obedient believer as one who treats others with grace. In our last study, we compared grace to a sign on a home’s doorpost that says, “This is a home marked by a gracious attitude toward others.” We do not need a literal sign, but we should live in a way that makes that attitude visible. Kindness is the outward expression of grace toward others and lays the foundation for genuine forgiveness.

We are commanded to become grace oriented to other believers and are to manifest that in being compassionate toward other believers.

tenderhearted, (eu-splang-chnoi) **compassionate.**

This word literally refers to the “gut.” Yes! You are to be identified by an attribute that you are moved in your inwards by the need of other believers – their need should grab you in the gut. This word is frequently used of the Lord Jesus Christ for the multitudes and of individuals who had needs. It is used to describe the reaction of the father in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:20). Kindness and compassion enable us to ***“...forgive each other.”***

forgiving one another, (cha-rizo-menoi) - **bestowing favor unconditionally or pardoning each other.**

This word is a middle/passive participle of the verb “**charizomai**” which means to forgive or pardon. The “middle/passive voice” means the believer participates in the action under the direction of the Holy Spirit. The use of the “participle” identifies a principle, and the “present tense” indicates the continuous action of “**bestowing favor unconditionally or pardoning someone.**”

This manifestation of grace is to be directed to “*one another.*” The Greek word is “**heautou**” is a reflexive pronoun meaning, to each other. Although forgiveness is a two-way street commanded to all believers, one’s behavior is not to be contingent upon the behavior of the other- this is grace, remember? It is not to be based on response.

C. Forgiving Each Other on the Same Basis as God forgives us:

Now! Here we have the means by which we are able to treat others in grace!

even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you –

The grammar is a bit complicated but is helpful to understanding how we can continue to treat others in grace even when they abuse our gracing them. (Oh! And by the way, it is not gracing them if we demand or even expect grace from them in return 😞)

This phrase begins with the comparative use of the Greek conjunction “**kathos**” meaning “**just as**” introducing a comparative clause. Then we have the word “**kai**” which is used here adjunctively and means “**also.**” Next, we have the masculine singular noun “**Theous**” which means “**God**” and is a reference to the Father.

Then we have the preposition “**ehn**” which is used with an emphasis on the three aspects of the Dative/Locative/instrumental cases identifying the means the location and the advantage and is associated with the word “**Christos**” which is transliterated into English by our word “**Christ.**” This is the help we have been looking for – we are advantaged, by means of our position in Christ, to have the forgiveness of God. It is because of our position in Christ that God the Father is able to forgive us. See! This is what it says, “*...treat each other on the same basis as God, through our position in Christ, has treated you in grace.*”

“... even as God, for Christ's sake hath forgiven you...”

The statement concerning God’s forgiveness of our sin is based on the Greek word “**charizomai**” which is a culminative aorist tense meaning a series of points of time that are all gathered into the whole and places

emphasis upon total *forgiveness*. It is in the middle voice indicating the Father's forgiveness based upon the work of Christ and our acceptance of His grace. It is in the indicative mood which is the mood of reality. It is in the dative/locative/instrumental case emphasizing our advantage of being in Christ who is the instrument by which we are forgiven. Those in Christ are the forgiven.

II. Is it Forgive or is it Forgive:

Here is an interesting thing, we are not told to ask for forgiveness but to confess; we confess Christ as Savior for salvation, and we confess our sins for fellowship. Where is a request for forgiveness? I John 1:9 says *If we confess our sins He us faithful and just IN ORDER To forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness*. The word "forgive" here in I John 1:9 is not the Greek word "charizomai" which is translated as "forgive" in our text in Ephesians 4:31-32. We have seen that the word used there is "charizomai." The word in I John 1:9 is the Greek word "alphae" which means, "to allow to go free." Charizomai used in Ephesians means we are to maintain a grace attitude toward each other as believers, while alphae used in I John 1:9 means when we confess our sins we are allowed to go free.

Ah! But, there is also another word we need to note here in I John 1:9; it is the Greek word "hina" which the translators simply translated "to" – "...he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins..." No! The Greek word "hina" means "...in order to" "...he is faithful and just in order to forgive our sins." (literally "He is faithful and just in order to let us go free from our sins.") It is Christ's righteousness that enables us to go free. God, because of Christ's righteousness and faithfulness, has forgiven us (charizomai) treated us in grace as per Ephesians 3:32 and we are to treat others in grace "...just as God, because of Christ, has treated you in grace.

Yes! I John 1:9 begins with the word "If," a 3rd class conditional clause – maybe we will and maybe we won't, but if we do, because he is faithful and just we are set free and are cleansed from all unrighteousness.

The issue is not to run around saying, "I forgive you" the issue is to treat others in grace. We are to treat others in grace and manifest compassion for them. Treating them in grace means we assume all the expense and responsibility for maintain a relationship with them and if it is genuine we will feel it in our "gut." We will have compassion for them.

Conclusion:

We have been set free from the penalty of sin as have other believers. We have even been set free from the power of sin and can resist the temptations. And, Praise God! One day we will be set free from the presence of sin.

In closing look with me briefly at the Parable of The Prodigal Son to set the stage for our applicational study next time.

Luke 15:11-24

11 And he said, A certain man had two sons: 12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. 13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. 14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. 15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. 17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, 19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. 20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. 21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. 22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: 23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

But it begins at Salvation:

For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God...

The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life...

With the heart man believes unto righteousness...

But with the mouth confession is made unto salvation...

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved!

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

(Ephesians 4:32)