

An Attribute of a Christian - Colossians 3:12-13
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Colossians 3:12 and 13. And shortly, I want to speak to you about an attribute of a Christian. Before we read, would you bow with me as we approach that throne of grace that you sang about?

Our Father, we give thanks that You have granted us another time together this side of eternity. And every time that You give us this day, it is to prepare us for that day, to work a change in us where we need, make us more in the image of the Lord Jesus. My Father, You did not save us and set us on a seat of do nothing. We all shall bear the image of the blessed Lord Jesus. And it is to that image that we are being changed. I ask for Your mercy upon every hearer that they receive it as thus saith the Lord, that they accept it as Thy message to them. My Father, honor Your Word. Give us Thy Spirit in expounding it correctly and setting forth Christ one other time here in this place. Bless Thy Word to the hearts of all here, saved or lost. In fellowship with Thee, or having missed that narrow path somewhere, and now just a wandering sheep. I pray that you might give every heart here a discerning and accepting heart and that we can leave here saying it was good once again to have been at the house of the Lord. Glorify Thy great name, exalt Thy Son, and Father for all these things, it is necessary for You to give us Thy Spirit, for we ask it in Christ's name. Amen.

Colossians 3:12 - Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.

All those, all Christians, will have more and more. Verse 13, **forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do you.** The work of God within our hearts conforming us into the image of His dear Son. And as God is forgiving, so all of His children will be. I've been somewhat overwhelmed this week with just that one word, forgiveness.

What do I keep? What do I bring to the people? What do I discard? How do I arrange it? Now, if any of you put up a guard already and you do not receive this, then I have failed. If you think someone has talked to me and that is the reason that I am dealing with this subject, you do not know me. What you say stays with me. I share it to no one unless you give permission. But about the only request I get from you today is to "pray for me" and parents concerned about their children.

Forgiveness. What is it? Well, you all know you have that meaning in your head. But how about forgiveness? And that in me, that attribute in me, being made in the image of Christ, I am forgiving all others at all times and in all circumstances. But that's almost lost today. A

characteristic in Christ's community, even though we profess Christ as Savior, we've lost that ability, that grace within to forgive.

Now you've all I heard time and again Romans 8:28 quoted, **all things work together for them that love God**. Rarely is verse 29, **whom He did foreknow, He did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son**. The image of His Son. Forgiving one another, Be that in the setting of a Christian church, work, or wherever, forgiving one another as Christ forgave you. You will become that forgiving person.

How do you characterize a Christian? There's so much. What distinguishing traits does he have - she have, that identifies them when others hear, when others see their manner of living, when others begin to know them, they say, that's a Christian. No doubt about it. Forgiveness in the church, particularly today, but forgiveness in all places, at all times, to all people.

Now, if I listed the features of a giraffe, trying to tell you what it was and how you could identify it, I'd say, "Well, it's got very long legs. One of the tallest of all animals that we knew about in our day. Got a long neck. Can reach leaves on a tall tree just standing on the ground". And you would say when you saw such an animal, "That's a giraffe".

What about a Christian? A Christian is kind. A Christian is loving. A Christian is compassionate. A Christian has a deep-seated belief in Christ. And a Christian is a forgiving man or woman, boy or girl. Just for curiosity's sake, I looked up the word Christian. I looked it up in several different dictionaries, and the common definition that I received from all was a person who believes and follows the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Well, many people could say that. But if it got down to the core of the very being, I wonder, we all would say, "I believe in His teachings". Even the lost would say, "Yeah, I believe in his teachings". But a Christian is far more than one that believes in what He taught. To him, all teachings of the Lord Jesus, all attributes of the Lord Jesus, they have that effect upon me in daily living, be it a Monday or a Saturday or a Sunday, His teachings have an effect upon my life, my lifestyle. All that He taught has a practical effect on all his children.

And again, I quote, **forgive even as Christ forgave you**. When He was teaching about praying, **Father, Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Forgive us our sins as we forgive all those who are indebted to us**. And then said Jesus very early on the cross there, **Father, forgive them. They know not what they do**. And as Scripture said that you are predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son.

Tell me what you know about forgiveness. I'm not talking about a little difference that might come up between two brothers or two sisters. What about the harm? What about the damage that you think that they did and they might have? The individual that bears the greatest likeness to the Lord Jesus is one that has learned to forgive.

"Well, they hurt - hurt me badly." And the old saying, "Well, you must forgive and forget". You can mark out that word forget, that's not in a person's mind. Sometimes it will be so devastating that it will always be with you what others did. So I'm not saying forget. I am saying you forgive.

And please do not tell me that you are a Christian if you are not a forgiving individual. Forgiveness elevates you to a place where angry words and angry deeds done against you have no effect upon you after you calm down and get over that initial anger.

Like Elijah, he was not going with Jehoshaphat and the King of Israel. "I'm not going with you. If it wasn't for the King of Judah, I wouldn't even have a word to say to you." He was so fiery in his spirit. And finally he said, "Okay, bring me a minstrel". Like Saul needed David on that harp to drive away the demons, Elisha needed a minstrel to calm him down within because he was so angry that the king of Israel dare would ask him anything.

So you're going to get angry. You're going to be upset. Sometimes you will be hurt. But you just get alone to yourself and you calm down, and you forgive. Somebody had a short answer. Someone didn't reply as you thought they should. Someone said something. And without forgiveness, that little word that they meant nothing by - nothing, it becomes over days and weeks and months, it becomes a monster in you. And it swells, it grows. Anger increases. And I'm asking you, is that the attitude of a Christian? Well, it might be for a moment. But later there's forgiveness.

And that frees you from the pitfall that lies ahead without forgiveness. Now turn with me to Ephesians 4 beginning with verse 30. To all the children of God. **And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you're sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor - clamor, a loud outcry or protest associated with anger - Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you. Even as God, for Christ's sake, forgave you.** Do not let the actions of others determine your reactions. If you get heated, try to keep your mouth closed until that subsides. And then go be alone with the Lord Jesus. Look at the cross. No man has ever had anything done to him like we did to the Lord Jesus. Look there. Stay there a while.

And don't let anyone's actions determine how you react to them. When you hold your actions of those that offend you, and that settles down within and there's no such thing as you forgiving one that did something that malicious. No, that's impossible. What you've done by that is you have stopped up the stream which flows from the heart of the Savior. Your daily bread is depending upon your heart, the condition of your heart. Your time in prayer and being raised to that height where you know, I am in the presence of the living God. You didn't get there by holding on to unforgiveness. And don't let that keep you from present benefits from above. **For all have sinned** Romans 3:23, **and come short of the glory of God.** Verse 24, **being justified.** Just as if I had never sinned. **Being justified freely by His grace.** Is there one sin in you that is not forgiven? Just one. To you that have learned forgiveness, to you that have not, even as Christ forgave you, so also do you. There is a large number today claiming to be Christians, sitting as a king or queen upon their own heart's throne. "No one has a right to offend me. I'm king. I'm a queen. He didn't have the right to say that. He didn't have the right to do that. She didn't have that right to talk to me or about me". And with unforgiveness, day after day, week after week, if you have unforgiveness, you're going to make the one that offended you, you're going to make them pay. You won't speak to them, you ignore them, have nothing to do with them until they regret what they did or said. You're gonna see that they are punished by you.

One day you say “I might consider forgiving them if they ask in the right manner, or if they ever prove themselves worthy of my forgiveness”. Now answer this question to yourself. When did you ever prove yourself worthy to be forgiven? When? Are you as Luther, are you? Climbing up stairs, walking on hot coals, crawling on my knees with glass and splinters, punishing myself till the blood ran out, just trying to find forgiveness, to become worthy of God's forgiveness. If you ever begin to put demands on your enemy before you forgive them, you've done something that God never did to anyone. And by unforgiveness, you sit in the place of God. Now when were you forgiven? Just answer that to yourself. When did God forgive me? Most of you are going to say that time when I asked Him for forgiveness.

To say that forgiveness follows repentance, it would seem logical. And it seems like we should know nothing of forgiveness until the Lord had granted repentance to us. **God hath also to the Gentiles granted repentance.** Faith and repentance are both gifts of God.

But when did the Lord Jesus forgive you? When you've done enough amends? No, He forgave me when I asked Him. Then what you're saying is, when you ask Him, Christ left glory again, came down and died again on Calvary because you asked to be forgiven. No. He did not, he shall not, ever die again. Then, you must say, “We were forgiven in Christ at Calvary”.

The only thing you received when you asked for forgiveness was a peace from the Lord making you aware that your sins had been forgiven. When do you forgive another that has sinned against you? Well, when they ask me, if they're nice about it. If you are a Christian, God forgave you of all your sins, and if anyone takes that and misuses it, and says that I gave you permission to live like the devil, or I set you free not to have to follow a standard Christ set for it, if you go out and say I said that, then that you made me a liar.

Your Christian liberty does not invade the space of another individual. You never exercise Christian liberty if what you do would offend a brother. Paul said, I will not eat meat if that meat offends my brother. So he sees a Jew coming towards him and he puts up the remainder of his ham sandwich in his pocket and never takes it out until that Jew that believes eating meat is wrong, especially that kind.

When do you forgive another? “Well, when they ask.” No, no, no, that's where I'm trying to get you to go to see. If you hold within any unforgiveness, it will continue to eat away like cancer at your insides. And you let it go. And you don't let that malice and that anger build up. You soon forgive, but you never go to that person and say, “I forgave you”, never. God never said to you, “You are forgiven” until you said, “Lord, I am a sinner”. You don't go to them and say, “Well, I forgave you”. You forgive them because it is eating away your life. And when they do, and they will, if they are a Christian, they will apologize. You say, “I forgave you. I forgave you way back then”.

Well, you don't know what they did. No. But I know what you did if you are a Christian to the Lord Jesus. And He never held up a standard saying, “When you get to this point in your Christian life, then I will forgive you. You're part of the crowd that put me to death on Calvary”.

No. And dear children of God, if you withhold forgiveness, then you've stopped the channel from which peace, joy, happiness, gladness, all flow from the Prince of Peace. And you don't know any of these things, because you are holding on to what somebody did or what somebody said. "Well, I know somebody's been talking to you", but no one has said a word to me. This did not originate from anybody saying anything about anybody else. So don't excuse that, but rather be honest with God and where you are.

Now go with me to Matthew 6 verse 14. **For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.** You'll never know forgiveness from your Father as long as there is unforgiveness in your heart. **If you forgive men, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.**

Again, I would remind you, you're thinking, "Well, that person is not worthy of my forgiveness. No one can say that about me and get away with it". And you let them know that you're angry and you've been angry for weeks, months, years, I don't know.

But you know what's crept into society in my lifetime? Excuses for the behavior of people. "Well, that man had a terrible experience in his past and that's what made him take that gun and kill 20 children. She had a terrible childhood. Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus because his parents deprived him of a toy he wanted really badly. And he never got over that trauma, so he betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver". We keep making excuses for all people, no matter what they do. "The reason they did this is not because of their parents' discipline or lack of discipline". Why don't we just get honest? Just you and God, just me and God.

I think I've told you this. A new pastor takes over in the locality there of that church. And he begins to visit some of those whose names are on the church roll but haven't attended there in a long time. And after he introduces himself and they to him, he said, "I'm pastor where you used to attend, and I would love to have you back. Could I persuade you to come back"?

They said, "Well, years back we were offended. The church bought a very expensive piano, and it was left up to the congregation to decide the best place that we could put that piano in that sanctuary. And my wife and I were outvoted". "Well, sir, I'm sorry. Maybe we can arrange it where you get the piano in the place that you wanted. Where did you want it"? And the gentleman turns and said, "Ma, where do we want that piano?" You say, that's frivolous.

No, no, that's actual happenings in what is supposed to be the congregation of the Lord. And we, as John mentioned, we are waiting for the moving of the Spirit greater than He is. But He, as that Dove, will never abide with the people where there's the least ill will or frustration or aggravation. And we all come in with a forgiving heart.

In Matthew 5, the Lord Jesus said, if you bring your gift to the altar, and you remember there that your brother's got aught, he's got a legitimate complaint against you, what you did. He said, you leave your gift. You don't go on with the offering up of your gift to the Lord. You go, you get that settled with your brother that you offended.

But again, do you realize how insensitive church members have become concerning forgiveness? We never deal with that. We never think about that. "I'm right". And you've got a big idol sitting

on your heart. "And that's me, mine, I. Not you, not yours, but me". And children, again, I would ask, don't put conditions upon anyone when you grant repentance to them. You're not God. God didn't put conditions upon you. Confess your sins. Repent before God. But dear child of God, you were forgiven 2,000 years ago at Calvary.

And do you have a right, do you have a right to continue in that state of not forgiving? Do you? Do I? No. No. If you put conditions upon when you grant repentance to another, I want you to go home this afternoon and I want you to go look in the mirror. And you stare in that mirror long enough until you see sitting on the throne of your heart, instead of the Lord, there you sit. The one in the highest rank and authority, that's you sitting as Lord paramount. Do you want God acting towards you as you do to others? Does anybody here want that? All of us here should say, "That wouldn't bother me a bit. I have nothing against anyone. I don't know of anything I've done or said wrong. And if they are a good brother or sister, they will let me know in kindness".

Listen again to the Lord Jesus in Matthew 7, the teachings on the mount there. **All things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you so to them. Be not deceived, God is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.** I don't want to face God if I'm holding within anything about anybody. I will step out into eternity, knowing within that slate is clean, and I have no ill will against anyone. One last, and then I'll close, and that's Matthew 18 - we begin with verse 23.

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants, And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him 10,000 talents. And according to their measurements and weight, a talent was 750 ounces of silver.

Verse 25, **but for as much as he had not to pay, his Lord commanded him to be sold and his wife and children and all that he had in payment be made. The servant therefore fell down and worshiped him saying, Lord, have patience with me and I'll pay thee all. Then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion and loosed him and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, found one of his fellow servants which owed him a hundred pence.** Pence is a penny, a day's work back then. The man owed him a hundred pence. Now remember what this man owed.

But he laid hands on him and took him by the throat saying, pay me that thou owest. And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, besought him, saying, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not, but went and cast him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry and came and told unto their Lord all that was done. Then his Lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredst me. Should not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his Lord was wroth, delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you if you from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. If you are not going to be one that forgives, you are going to run into a God that will not forgive.

If He forgave you, I do not care what others have done, what others have said. They didn't do to you what you did to the Lord Jesus, if you are a Christian. Is not the attitude of that first man like most today? We claim that we were forgiven. And at the same time, "I don't have to forgive anyone. I mean, really, look at all that I've accomplished and you think that I'm to be put in a position of forgiving". Don't leave this old world with envy, bitterness, jealousy, hatred, maliciousness, unforgiveness. Don't leave this old world with these things within.

And you do not have to wait until somebody says, I did you wrong. You don't have to wait till they make amends to forgive them. You forgive them within, act right, do right before them, But they'll never know you forgave them until they say to you, "I wronged you, I sinned against you". And if you think they're not worthy of forgiveness, go again to Calvary and look at that innocent man on that middle cross that paid your eternity with Him in glory. Children, don't let unforgiveness turn into malice and malice into outright hatred. Don't let that happen to you.

Forgive. Clean the slate. If it is hard for you to forgive, just ask God. "Lord, I'm having a problem forgiving". Just ask Him. He will not permit His children to live in this selfish bubble of "I owe nobody anything, but nobody ever better not offend me". You look to Jesus and you see Him and again afresh and anew, you see what your sins did to Him.

May the Lord grant all of us the grace and mercy to be a forgiving Christian.