

Colossians -Feb 2014 Class

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[0 : 00] Well, let me say thanks to all of you for being here, despite the fact that this is probably one of the coldest days of the year. We're glad you were willing to come out and bear the low temperature and be here with us, so thank you again for your presence.

We are in Colossians chapter 3, and if you have your Bibles, you might want to open them to this portion. We've been working our way through here in a kind of a slipshod fashion for the simple reason that we haven't been terribly consistent.

There were some times that we weren't able to meet, times that I wasn't always available, and we've got some holes in our study here, but we'll do what we can to plug them.

Let's just jump in, if we may, with verse 13, where Paul talks about the necessity of forbearing one another and forgiving one another.

And let me say also, for the benefit of newer folks who are with us, that the sheet we are working from is a photocopy of what is referred to as the 26th Translation New Testament.

[1 : 06] And if you will look at your scripture sheet, those of you who have one, you will see that the beginning of each new verse is in bold type, and that indicates that that is the King James Version.

And then other translations follow that, and of course you'll see that there are not 26 different translations given.

However, the explanation is that the references that follow the King James Version are taken from one of the other translations in the 26th Translation.

So, with verse 13, for instance, you've got Knox at the end of the next verse, and that's a Knox Translation, and then the other is Coniber for C-O-N, and the T-C-N-T is the 20th Century New Testament, etc.

So, where there is some degree of variation, the editors included that translation. But, of course, many of the verses would be absolutely identical in a lot of the translations.

[2 : 20] So, there they just, rather than include all of them, they just included those that were of any significant difference. So, when Paul talks about the necessity of forbearing one another, this gets right down to the nitty-gritty of how believers are supposed to treat each other.

And we are to forbear with one another, and in our modern vernacular, it would be simply this, to put up with one another. And sometimes that takes some doing, because, was it old Vance Havner who used to say, you know, the Scripture says that we have this treasure in earthen vessels, and some of the pots are a bit cracked.

And that's what we have in the body of Christ. And then, and then I'm reminded of Ray Ortlund's book, which I really enjoyed immensely, and I'll be recommending that shortly, too.

And a real eye-opener. And I was always amused at the title, but I thought it probably was just so much fluff. Well, as it turned out, I got a copy of the book and read it, and it is anything but fluff.

And I must tell you, I'm embarrassed that I allowed this book to be in publication for over ten years before I read it. And I kind of get turned off when I look at the titles of books, and I get the impression that they're just trying to put a cutesy title on it, you know.

[3 : 50] And after a while, it gets kind of wearisome. And that title kind of turned me off. I was amused by it, but at the same time, I thought, oh, come on, give me a break, you know. But the book is marvelous.

And it's called Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know Them. And it is quite a book. So, in the body of Christ, we've got people who appear to be normal until you get to know them.

And we've all got some peculiarities about us. And what Paul is saying here, I think, is in recognition that we all have some oddities.

We all have some quirks. We all have some things about us that are a little different. Some might be considered downright bizarre. And you know what you're supposed to do with these people? You put up with them.

And you love them anyway. Because, believe it or not, you've got your quirks too. So, we are all in this thing together. And I think that he is getting down to a real nitty-gritty thing here.

[4 : 57] Forbearing one another. Putting up with one another. Bear with one another's faults. Be generous to one another. And forgiving one another. And we've been talking about that of late, Sunday mornings. About the eagerness with which we as believers should be ready to forgive one another.

Because in different ways, at different times, we can all rattle each other's chains in ways that we shouldn't. By things we say or things we do that create an offense.

And we're all capable of that. Now, James reminds us, I think it's in chapter 3, where he said, In many ways, we offend all.

Which simply means that in different ways, we have the potential of getting to one another. Getting under one another's skin.

And we do because we're human beings. It just goes with the territory of being human. And we all have flesh out of which we sometimes operate. Not always out of the spirit.

[6 : 03] So, I think bottom line is, will you cut each other some slack? And recognize that, like Bill Gothard used to say, Please be patient, God isn't finished with me yet.

We're all in process. And you know, none of us has arrived. So, we are to forgive one another. If any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

We who have been forgiven so much should not be reluctant to forgive others who have offended us. And you know, I'd like to stop here for just a minute and run something by you.

Because I'm not sure about this at all. I don't know that it's a valid distinction. But at the same time, I've been weighing this and thinking about it a lot in connection with the Marriage on the Rock series that I've been doing about marriage relationships.

And the idea of forgiveness, I can't get this out of my mind, but I'm reluctant to teach it, you know, as though it were pure gospel.

[7 : 16] Because I have some reservations about it, so I'd like to know what you think about it. And by the way, this is supposed to be more than a lecture. It's supposed to be an interaction type discussion thing.

But so often you do not interrupt me. And I want you to know you're welcome to do that. And nobody will think you're rude.

And nobody will think you're rude if you challenge something I say by saying, Hey, Mark, I don't buy that. What about this verse or that verse? That's fine, because we're here looking for truth. We're not here to just be indoctrinated.

And when I'm talking about this forgiveness, I make a distinction. Valid or not, I don't know.

Because I can't point to a chapter and verse and say, I know I'm right because of what this verse says.

Because I don't have such a verse. But I'm really wondering if forgiveness can be real, or forgiveness be genuine, if there is no repentance or apology that precedes the act of forgiving.

[8 : 26] And I know probably the standard answer is that you are supposed to forgive people anyway.

Even if they don't ask for forgiveness, you're supposed to forgive them anyway. I don't know that that can actually be done. And the reason I don't know that is because when one person offends another person, hurts another person by something they say or do, that is a kind of moral, emotional transaction that takes place.

And there are always a minimum of two people involved. Maybe a whole lot more, because somebody may say something, for instance, that offends a whole bunch of people in an audience. But on a personal plane, there is required a minimum of two people for an offense to take place. The offender and the offended. That's the bare minimum. And there is something between these two people.

And I call that, of course, the offense. And I am saying that there is a transaction that occurs there. And even the word trans means over or through.

[10:06] It's a connection. There is a connection between these two people, the offended and the offender. And I have real difficulty in understanding how you can forgive someone who does not acknowledge that they have offended you.

So, the distinction that I come up with. And maybe this is splitting hairs and it's not justified. I don't know. But I'd like your honest opinion about it.

I'm almost of the opinion that you cannot forgive someone who offended you, who does not acknowledge that they have offended you and have apologized for it.

So, the distinction I make is between forgiving and having a forgiving attitude or a forgiving spirit. And by that I mean we ought to always be at the ready and eager and willing to forgive anyone who asks for our forgiveness.

[11:22] But I don't know that you can forgive someone, not only who doesn't ask for your forgiveness, but may who not even acknowledge that they have offended you.

You can have a forgiving attitude so that you would be happy to forgive them. If they would acknowledge the offense, you would be eager to forgive them.

But can you forgive them? I mean, thinking in terms of the offense and the offender is a transaction.

And it seems to me that forgiveness and an apology involves the same two people.

And that is a transaction. Is it possible to have a bona fide transaction where you only have one person? I wonder about that. Maybe it's like hate the sinner, not the sin, where, you know, you can look at that person and think of this being a flaw in their character and just, you know, you more or less dismiss it.

You're forgiving them and dismissing it without involving them, maybe, you know. I don't know. I think... Well, I hear what you're saying and I think that's probably been my position most of the way along.

[12:42] But in trying to analyze and really separate these things, I don't know. I don't know. Mark? Yes? I'm going to tell you a story or give you an example of forgiveness.

Not too long ago, maybe a year or so ago, my sister basically stabbed me in the back. And I'll just tell you guys, it was very, very hurtful. And at the time, this isn't the first time she's done it to me, but this was, I decided the last time it was ever, that it happened again, that I was going to end up in this emotional state with her.

So I decided, you know, the best thing to do would be cut off all ties and that would be, you know, the way I'd handle it. You know, I'm not going to forgive her. I'm not going to speak her name.

Nothing. So it went on, you know, went on for a while. And she will never, ever acknowledge that she's done anything wrong. And I knew that.

I mean, I've been with her before and to almost the same situation. So I know how she reacts to things and I knew I would never get anything out of her. So as time went on, I started thinking about it and thinking about it.

[13:57] And I decided that, you know, I'm going to let it go. And I'm just going to forgive her. And when I see her, I will speak to her and, you know, I will talk to her.

But I will not associate with her as far as going out to lunch or doing anything fun with her because I'm not going to set myself up for a third time of being treated the way I was treated.

So after I decided to forgive her in that area, the emotional peace fell over me.

I wasn't always tied up and not worried about what's going to happen when I see her, when I get in the game with such a woman, what am I going to do, what am I going to do? And I was going to do. All that calmed out. And it was good that it had because recently here, my mother was in the hospital.

It was kind of an emergency thing. And I was going to make all the phone calls. And I called my sister myself and told her that mom's in the hospital. Now, my sister just had surgery herself, so it was kind of hard for her to get it.

[15:04] But I managed to have a decent conversation with her. She came to the hospital. She and I talked. And I was so thankful I did the forgiveness in my heart, not caring what she did, because it was for the sake of my mother, too.

Because, you know, how would it have been? My mother's laying in bed very, very ill, and the two sisters are going to be carrying on, you know. Yeah. We've got to put heavy differences aside. So, I think you can forgive without the other part.

I mean, just in my case, that's how it went. Okay. Well, I do not dispute that. And it's a very noble, very admirable thing that you did.

And as a result, you got an inner peace from it. You got a kind of a release from it. And I think that's very important. But it didn't involve her.

No. No. And yet, she was the source of the offense. Exactly. So, maybe... Again, I don't want to split hairs here.

[16:06] I'm saying, maybe this was not a bona fide forgiveness, because it did not involve her. But it certainly was a practical forgiveness that freed you up in your own spirit.

Kind of released you from the resentment or bitterness or whatever. Exactly. And that's really valid, especially for inner peace. So, maybe...

And again, I don't know this for sure, but maybe you benefited from a forgiving spirit. It would have been even better if she had come to you and said, Mary, I know I really hurt you by thus and so and thus, and I'm sorry.

Would you forgive me? Then, you've got a transaction. You've got the two parties. The offended and the offender. You didn't have that when you released her inside, you know, in your own spirit. Yet, you did derive from that what you really needed, which was a lot of turmoil inwardly, and no rest and no peace, this kind of thing. So, I appreciate you saying that, really.

[17:24] But at the same time, she is only responsible for herself, right? Yeah. She does what's right in her before the Lord. She can't be responsible for how her sister reacts.

That's true. That's true. You can't control somebody else's willingness or unwillingness to apologize. How about the times that you don't even know you look at somebody?

I'm sorry? Sometimes you don't even know that you might have offended somebody. Oh, yeah. And that's an excellent point to bring up. We're very capable of unintentionally offending someone, and we don't even know that we've done that.

And you know what complicates it further is a tendency of the person that we have offended to dummy up and not let the offender know that they have been hurt.

But what they do, even though they may not want to or plan to, what they do is, it's inevitable, they start building a case of resentment against that person who offended them, and they don't even have a clue that they've offended.

[18:37] So they don't even have an opportunity to offer an apology because they have no idea they did or said anything wrong. And yet, how difficult is it to go to someone and say, can we talk?

Well, sure. What do you want to talk about? Well, something that you said or something that you did the other day, and it really wounded me. And I just felt the need to tell you that I was really deeply hurt by that.

You were? Well, I'm sorry. I know I had no idea. Then you give them an opportunity to make it right, you know, to make an apology. On the other hand, some people are emotionally constructed in such a way that it never occurred to them to apologize for anything, to anybody, under any circumstance, because they see, well, one of my favorite examples, I used it at one of my Marriage on the Rock things, was an old John Wayne movie.

And this John Wayne was in charge of this garrison. He was a colonel wearing the northern uniform, you know, and she wore a yellow ribbon.

That was the name of the movie. And this young lieutenant came riding up to John Wayne. He was there on his horse, and he was giving him some kind of a report.

[20:19] And John Wayne asked him a question about something, and he said, No, sir, I didn't get that done, and I'm sorry. And Wayne responded with, Never apologize, mister.

It's a sign of weakness. And you know there are a lot of people who feel that way. There are a lot of people who feel that way.

And you stop and really analyze what is involved in an apology. And weak people don't do that. Weak people will never apologize for anything.

It takes some real strength of character to say, I was wrong. I'm sorry. Please forgive me. Weak people never do that.

John Wayne had it wrong, and as I've often said, he should have asked the director for a rewrite on that line. Because that's really...

[21:19] And you know something? You stop and think about it. Apology, apologizing to somebody for anything, is really tough.

It is not... I feel angry. I feel angry. I feel angry. I feel angry. I feel angry. It is not easy to do. Because it's an admission to ourself and to others that we really are not flawless after all. We are capable of really messing up. You know? We can say wrong things and do wrong things. And to be big enough to admit it, I am persuaded, is a real step in spiritual growth. And we see this so much, especially in marriages. I tell you, having been heavily involved in marital counseling for the last 50 plus years, this is a big, big item, is couples that go for years, sometimes, carrying grudges, resentment against each other, and they may still be sleeping in the same bed and eating breakfast at the same table, but there is an emotional distance between them that has been caused by unresolved offenses where there was never an apology offered, never an admission of wrongdoing or everything. And a person who is hurt or offended by someone else's behavior absolutely cannot, in my view, cannot avoid building a case of resentment against that person. [23 : 12] And they may not talk about it, but there is a separation that occurs there. And sometimes they can go on for years and years and all at once they may wake up and say, what's happened to us?

We are not close like we used to be. What's happened? Where did we, you know? And a lot of times I think the culprit is offenses that were committed, that were never acknowledged and never made right, never apologized for, never forgiven. Forgiveness was never sought for them. And we have a way of warehousing our hurts. We just tuck them away in our spirit. And if ever we have occasion to relive that offense, we experience the pain all over again. Because that residual effect is still there. You know? The old pain stop. Yeah. It's, and this I think is part and parcel of what's being talked about here. Forgiving one another. [24 : 21] And if you don't, it's, it's, the wounding of another person that is not resolved results in resentment.

Resentment results in bitterness. Bitterness is nothing but resentment gone to seed. And it creates a bitter spirit and a separation, an emotional separation, even if they're still sleeping together. There's an emotional separation there that takes place that maybe neither one can really put their finger on. But it's just not what it ought to be. And it's a, it's a common malady, I think, in a lot of marriages. If you, if you don't have a forgiving spirit and forgives on, whether they ask for it or not, whether they apologize, if you don't have a forgiving spirit, it eats in you and harms your spiritual grace. Absolutely. And harms. And so, I think God wants us to forgive rather the other person acknowledges that they are asked for forgiveness. [25 : 35] Yeah. Yeah. And that's what, it was always that talked about love. And that's what love is. It's unconditional.

It's not, you love someone unconditionally whether they deserve it or not. Yeah. And in fact, you talk about deserving it. The need to forgive presupposes an offense committed. And when we forgive, we are giving someone a gift. It is a giving. You know, it is a giving. Forgiving is a giving of a gift. And, and not only do we remove the consequences of the offense from them to, and giving them this gift, but like you said, we remove an impediment in our own spirit. And like, like Mary was saying, this frees up something within you. And you know, very often, if we have an unforgiving spirit or if we refuse to forgive somebody, we tend to think that this is our way of payback. [26 : 50] By withholding forgiveness, we are somehow getting even with them. But really, we are, we are taking on to ourselves a kind of bonding, a negative bonding that bonds that offense to us and almost makes us a prisoner of our own unforgiving spirit.

A physician by the name of, of, S.I. McMillan wrote a book. It's probably, it's probably 30 years old now, but I remember how it impressed me at the time. It was called None of These Diseases. And, it talked about the awesome power of forgiveness and the power of holding a grudge.

And, he gave an example about a man who had a grudge against somebody in an unforgiving spirit. And, he hated the person every time he thought of him, you know. And, he said, in effect, the man who hurt him ended up controlling him.

Years later, he said, he won't even let me sleep well at night. I can't even enjoy a good steak because of what I am harboring and resentment against that person.

[28 : 11] And, all the while, he thought he was somehow hurting him. But, all he was doing was hurting himself. It's really strange the way these things work.

You can lead to health issues, too. Yeah, you're right. Yeah. People probably live longer and are healthier. Yeah. Henry Brandt, who was an outstanding Christian psychologist, and he was headquartered up in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

And, he wrote a book by the title of When You're Tired of Fooling Around and You Really Want a Cure, Give Me a Call. That was the title of the book.

I still got that book, by the way. It's remarkable. And, he would, he had an office for clinical psychology and a man, it was thoroughly biblically based in all of his counseling and everything. And, people would come in at their initial visit and they would tell their symptoms and what they're struggling with and what not and what. And, he says, very often, the issue would come down to this one question that I asked them.

[29 : 19] Okay. Who are you mad at? Who are you mad at? He said, you'd be surprised.

You'd be surprised. Sometimes it's a parent and it may go back 20, 30 years or a boss or a neighbor or a spouse or whatever. But, it has a way of really taking a toll on you.

Life is too short to live it that way but some people prefer to. So, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

So, in deference to what Mary said about her personal example of how a forgiving spirit freed up something inside of her, that's certainly commendable and desirable and I think that would maybe be the least that we should settle for but you know what I think would be the best would be if, and this might be this might be to you or to others unthinkable but maybe this is the ideal.

We don't often achieve the ideal but if you could go to your sister and say, can we talk? There's something that's really bothering me and I think you ought to know about it.

[30 : 46] What are you talking about? What is it? And you just tell her and give her at least an opportunity which she may not take or she may deny.

She may say, well you're too thin skinned or you shouldn't feel that way or I didn't mean it that way or whatever. But wouldn't it be wonderful if she were to say, I never really realized that Mary. But I really have a believer. Well, is she a believer? She's Catholic and no, she does not. Well, then in deference to her, maybe it's unreasonable to expect something from her that she doesn't have the power to provide.

That's true. Yes. You know, as an unbeliever, she doesn't have the resources that you have and she doesn't have the appreciation for the subject that you have.

Well, like I said, if this had been the first time, it didn't have been the detail. If it had been the second time, I got real leery. The third time, like I said, I was done.

[31 : 57] Yeah. Well, I'll tell you, and I don't want to, you know, I'm not a psychiatrist, I don't want to try to psychoanalyze what's going on in your sister's mind and heart, but, I would say, for her to dish out these offenses on you, something's bothering her about you.

I don't know if it's jealousy or resentment or whatever it is, but she obviously feels a need to throw these barbs at you every now and then. Well, to be honest with all of you, I have six brothers and sisters and she's done it to all of us.

Is she the most? No, she's middle. And she's done it to all of us. And my personal theory is she is trying to alienate the rest of us from our parents.

Really? What do you suppose her motivation would be?

She wants to be a good child. I mean, I think that's the only thing I can figure out, but this is really the truth. She has alienated, especially my mother.

[33 : 18] my mother is very gullible. And she believes everything my sister says. And you don't cross anything my sister says with my mom.

We've learned that. The rest of us have all gotten together and we've made our peace. And we keep with mom and dad.

I try to get mom and dad at least once a week note. Really, keeping a president. So do with all my brothers and sisters. Because we have the one sister that has done this to every single member in the family.

And including in-laws, too. So, I mean, she's a man. She's a family and they've not adapted to the in-laws. Yeah. Well, that's hurtful to everybody. And I couldn't begin to justify or legitimize and