

## Colossians 3:12-18 – Forgive One Another

### Pray

**Introduction** – When I was 13 years old I made an all star baseball team here in NC that actually won our region and was headed to the state tournament and there was a kid on the team NAMED ROBBIE (TELL THE STORY) – *And as we were headed home from State there was some cutting up in the van when Robbie turns around and spits on me – Now if you cant tell I am Irish and in that moment my fury began to escalate and I had a choice before me as how to respond!*

- You see when sinners get in close proximity like a baseball team and even in the church there will be offenses and sin against and conflict with one another – *And yet the Scriptures call us to something that is quite radical and certainly countercultural which is to forgive* – We live in a world OF JERRY SPRINGER and Divorce court TV where people are celebrated that when they are insulted they are able to come back immediately with a well-crafted return
- **And this is found even in the church where when wrongs are done against us we either blow up right then in a fury or we stew and think “well if you don’t know what you did then I am certainly not going to tell you”** – *And I think too often in the church we think that the teachings of Jesus who said blessed are the merciful for they will receive mercy that this is what a really exemplary Christian looks like*

But that is not at all what Jesus is saying as he says those that forgive their debtors are the very ones who will be forgiven – *And in the parable in Matthews gospel about the one who owed a massive debt that was forgiven and then turned around a choked his own servant who owed him and put him in jail reveals a heart that is condemned if you will not forgive your brother 70x7!* (Matthew 18:22-35)

- What I want us to hear today that what Jesus is saying about Mercy in the Beatitudes and what Paul is saying here to the Colossians is that mercy and forgiveness are not ways to be a good Christian – *But being merciful means you understand the gospel of the Kingdom!*

**Context** – Paul has just told the Colossians in the previous verses that there were some things/some vices they should shed off or put to death – *And he now turns to tell them of the things they need to put on which is clothing befitting the people of God who now have life in Christ!*

- **TRANSITION TO THE TEXT** – *And what we will see in this text is that because of who we are in Christ there is an outfit we should wear in order to bear with one another and forgive one another:*

**(READ VERSE 12)** – Paul begins this section by reminding them and us of who we are in Christ – *And what we see again is that God in Christ is not tolerating us but He delights over us like He did over His Son at the Jordan River this is my beloved Child in whom I am well pleased* – Listen to these descriptors of who you are if you are an adopted child in Christ

- **Chosen** – Peter in his epistles calls us elect exiles (a descriptor I increasingly like) – *This is a glorious truth that tells us God came after us and brought us in to the family in an act of Amazing Grace!*
- **Holy** – As my dad says of this: *“We have been set apart by God from sin, Satan, selfishness, and the systems of this evil age unto the Savior for His service”*
- **Beloved** – *The Creator of the universe has set His affections on us!*

**How has God loved us and chosen us?** Paul tells the Ephesian Christians that before the foundation of the World God set His affections on us to adopt us in to His family

- All of these adjectives applied to the Colossian Christians are elsewhere applied to Israel/to Jesus/and to the Church – *So Christian be encouraged this morning you are a child of the King chosen by Him and Loved by Him* (This is why adoption is such a beautiful picture of what has happened to us in the Gospel we have a loving father who has brought us in to His family)

Paul here though in highlighting the Sovereign electing purposes of God does not divorce them from human responsibility – *On the contrary it is precisely because we have been adopted that we are called to a new life that is consistent with our identity* – It is not that we do these things to be accepted in to the family it is because we have been accepted in to the family we put on this clothing!

- So in light of our identity Paul gives us an imperative to literally wear these traits that are similar to the fruits of the Spirit and are the traits that Jesus embodied and wore – **It has been said that clothing makes the man as Mark Twain once said, “Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence on Society”** – Well this is certainly true spiritually of the Christ follower as we are called to dress like our older brother!
- **Illustration – Did you want to dress like your older brother?** *Well I was the older brother (pic of me – looking back I wouldn't encourage my brothers to dress like me, in fact my sweater is on backwards – And what if Tony were your older brother how did he dress?)* – Well here we are good company though if we spiritually we dress like our older brother Jesus!

And just one note before we look at the clothing Paul is telling us here something I was taught for my own sanctification that in the Christian life it is not enough to just take off something you must replace it better – *Or maybe a better way to say it, “It is not enough to just play defense in the Christian life you must play offense so as we kill sin we replace it with something better”*

- Thomas Chalmers says it like this: *“There is not one personal transformation in which the heart is left without an object of ultimate beauty and joy. The heart's desire for one particular object can be conquered, but its desire to have some object is unconquerable. The only way to dispossess the heart of an old affection is by the expulsive power of a new one.”*

**Compassion** – This is the trait that you have a tender heart for people – *And in keeping with playing offense as well as defense it is not enough to just get rid of selfishness or coldness you must replace it with compassion like you would replace a ratty old shirt with a new one!*

- Jesus dons these traits perfectly as He was the compassionate one who fed and healed people and even looked out over the Jerusalem that would crucify Him weeping because they were sheep without a shepherd – *Meditate on the fact that we have been shown compassion in the gospel that Christ not only felt for us He acted on our behalf to solve our biggest problems and then lets go and do likewise!*

**Kindness** – This is an attitude of concern for neighbor and his good – *And again in the gospel we have been shown a kindness we do not deserve and thus we should put off malice and put on kindness!*

**Humility and Meekness (lowliness – but this is not to be confused with weakness because Christ was no wimp!)** – *I put them together because meekness speaks to a lowliness as well in which you consider the needs of others above your own*

- *We must kill pride but we can only do so by putting on humility and lowliness as we meditate on the creed that the one who owned the entire cosmos humbling Himself to become a man and not just a man but a man that washed the feet of even the one who would betray Him – If we look to Him we can have this mind in our midst that considers the interests of others above ourselves as we put on the mind of Christ who consider the interests of others above himself!*

**Patience** – This is the idea of being longsuffering with people because there will be people in your life that make you suffer long which has everything to do with Forgiveness – *We must put off impatience with patience as we remind ourselves that God has been infinitely patient with us in our sin and thus as His people now we turn and do likewise*

- A fact that I remind myself of daily when I am on capital boulevard (98) – *In fact I began thinking of this garment this week as I studied as my socks because my feet are being sanctified daily!*

One thing to consider is that this dressing up is not to be done in Isolation but in community – *As we help each other with our new clothes as we seek to put on these traits that are not natural to the sinful man but now are attainable by the power of the Spirit and the help of our brothers and sisters – I mean I know this better than anyone as a colorblind person I often need help picking out ties for a suit*

**(READ V. 13) – Putting on these traits has everything to do with bearing with one another and forgiveness** – We are exhorted here to bear with one another or endure hardship for another – *And Paul knows he must ask this because we are a family of sinners which means a lot of bearing with one another*

- *And I know I am lot to deal with but as one preacher said **“this doesn’t mean you have to think I am terrific it just means you have to bear with me!”***

Paul does not just say bear with one another he says if someone has a complaint, an offense, against another we are called to forgive that one and not just forgive once but for this to be the habitual way of life for the believer – *And again this has in mind real offense not just something minor that we forgive – This is easier said than done but this is what we are called to*

- *This doesn’t mean this is going to be easy or even instantaneous or this is even simplistic – For real offenses it could and will take time for reconciliation and it could be that there are days when you feel you have truly forgiven and then something happens that triggers past feelings – But it does mean that the life of Christian is set toward forgiveness!*
- *Now having pastored now almost 5 years I am under no illusion that this wont be a process – In many instances there will be a time of declaration that one has forgiven but then it will be an active work to continually sync your daily emotions with what you have declared as you work actively on behalf of that person to truly forgive*

Some practical thoughts on this ministry of forgiveness:

- 1) **Remember that you will never forgive someone as much God has already forgiven you (this is the motivation Paul gives for us to forgive!) – Or think about it like this when we fail to forgive we have exaggerated the offense against us and we have minimized our offense against a holy God – On that day outside the gates of Jerusalem the muscles of our Lord were convulsing and He is suffocating as the wrath of God due our sins and offenses is being poured out upon Him**
  - a. *And when we then in turn realize that and refuse to lash out but rather forgive all we are doing in that moment is recognizing with thankfulness that the Lord has not kept a record of wrongs we have done against Him – How then can not do the same for our brother?*
- 2) **This doesn’t mean the things done against you aren’t wrong or evil – They are but it means that we trust in justice of God and we trust that on that great day of judgment even every idle word will be held to account there will be justice and judgment we can leave vengeance to Him!**
- 3) **Do this in community** – *If you are really struggling with bitterness and not sure how to go about forgiveness talk with an elder, or GGL and say I need help to cultivate a heart of mercy and forgiveness, help me!*
- 4) **Remember that bitterness ends up hurting you ultimately** – *And one pastor even seemed to imply that physical ailments can be connected to bitterness, I am not sure if that is true but I do know we are complex beings and soul, mind and body are connected*
- 5) **Forgiveness is an action ultimately based in choice not emotion as you choose to actively forgive that person** – *This doesn’t necessarily mean you will be best buds this side of eternity but it does mean that you will choose to forgive them and work hard to make sure that is true!*
- 6) **Lack of Forgiveness is deadly to community** – And how often are we to forgive? 70x7! (Matt. 18:22)

**(READ V. 14) – Now the most important piece of clothing** – *The crowning garment that pulls all the other pieces together so that you know you’re looking good is Love – You know the outfit isnt looking raggedy if you have on love!*

- Love binds all the other traits together in harmony – *And if you do not have love you wont bear with nor forgive as love governs these other things* – i.e. if you love you will be kind and compassionate and forgiving and so on
- Love is the mark of a true servant of Christ as we choose to show strong affection toward those to whom Christ has shown strong affection – *As we love as family brothers and sisters together and put on display for the world that all we know love and love has a name Jesus of Nazareth who most clearly at the cross showed us what love looks like as He gave of Himself so that others would have life!*
- How much are you called to love? *As much as you love yourself* – Consider the implications of that this week in GG!

**(READ V. 15)** – Paul continues by saying put on Peace or more clearly let Peace rule or have dominion or control over your heart or the place that is the center of your will – *Instead of rivalry, bitterness, quarreling let peace be supreme in our church relationships*

- Tragically throughout the history of the church from Philippi to FBC Possum Holler there has been strife and dissension in the church – *As sadly churches fight over dress codes, and carpet colors, musical styles, and other nonsense* – *I know of one friend in which his grandmother would take to services any times the church was gathering except the first Wednesday of every month because that was when they had BUSINESS MEETING and she didn't want to him to witness the fighting that would take place*
- Thankfully by God's grace that doesn't mark us at IDC but we shouldn't be foolish to think it never will and that we are somehow better than these churches – *We must be on guard in this area and let peace rule among us!*

And this here is communal as well – *Paul is not speaking here about your subjective consciousness of feeling peace about a decision internally but instead he is speaking of the peace of Christ being literally in the Greek “The Umpire”*– Now he is talking about an umpire at some of the ancient games Tony, baseball is not in the bible!

- But Paul is saying Shalom or Peace is to govern how we interact with one another – *And that we who have been given peace with God should then manifest that peace among ourselves* – Pray for this to rule us this week in GG!
- *Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God*

**(QUICKLY!!! READ V. 16)** – Now Paul admonishes the saints to let the Word of Christ dwell richly in the midst of your church or to put on the Word – *The Word should have free reign in the IDC house to go where it will and to have authority as it sets up residency among us* – Which is why the BFM2000 calls the Scriptures “The true center of our Christian union”

- This is the only time in the NT the phrase “Word of Christ” is used – *It is most likely referring to teaching about Christ as well as the Words that Christ Himself spoke* – *But by implication this means the whole counsel as all the words of Scripture have been breathed out by the Spirit of Christ and therefore when it comes to red letter bibles every letter should be red!*

**Questions to Consider:** *Do you love the Word or do you maybe occasionally read it but it is not rich to you? Are you a sponge soaking it up? Is IDC truly a people of the book?* – **Illustration:** *I saw a video a couple of years ago of tribe in Africa waiting for a plane to arrive with the first ever translation of the Scriptures and when it got there and they showed them the book the tribe went in to celebration*

- Oh and brothers and sisters we have them readily available to us even on our phones but do we love them like that?

We let the Word dwell in us so with all wisdom we can admonish and teach one another – *And we are to do this through signing*

- The singing time is not just a set up for the preaching but is a time for portable theology whereby We are teaching one another in our signing, preaching the gospel to one another – *Corporate musical worship functions to teach and encourage, so don't just go through the motions engage with the song and with the family – The elements in our service is intentional to drive you to the gospel as through Word and Response to the Word we worship but not only that we instruct one another as we do so!*

**TIME????** Sadly the church has messed up here – One commentator said: *“We have blown up balloons, danced in the aisles... and sung ditties whose theological content makes nursery rhymes sound like (the theology of) Thomas Aquinas... shallow music forms shallow people. Real praise occurs when we open our hearts and cry speak Your Word so strongly we can't hear anything else”*

- Thankfully we are seeing a revival of sound theology in musical worship leaders who see it as their role during our musical worship to instruct the body – *And I am thankful to be a part of a church where Donnie works really hard to select songs that will compliment the teaching and be there own source of worship and instruction!*
- **Question to Consider:** Do you come to the gathering with the mindset that I will sing in such a way as to preach to my brother, and preach to my sister the gospel? *IDC Member at least one thing you should be actively considering when you come to this gathering is how can I instruct and be instructed by brothers and sisters and particularly through song – That means engaging the songs with your mind and emotion not just singing along!*

Finally put on thankfulness rather than complaining and ungratefulness – *Sadly even or maybe at times especially Christians are an ungrateful people who feel entitled* – DAD'S STORY ABOUT THE WAITRESS! (TIME???)

- If we understand the gospel that tells us we have been transferred from the Kingdom of Darkness to the Kingdom of the Son – *And that we have been given that which we don't deserve and spared receiving that which we do deserve* – This will help us cultivate an attitude of thanksgiving because our greatest problem has been solved everything else is just gravy!
- Aristedes in the 2<sup>nd</sup> said this of the church and may it mark us as well: *“Every morning and every hour they praise and thank God for His goodness to them, and for their food and drink they offer thanksgiving. Such O' king is the commandment given to the Christians and such is their conduct.”*

*(READ V. 17)* – And as you don this outfit all that you do and say is done in obedience to the Lord – *This is one reason why I am so big on us realizing the church is not something we do but something we are as in all our lives, in our marriages, our hobbies, our neighborhoods, our jobs we are seeking to glorify God not just when we come to a building on Sundays – in whatever you do, do it in the name of Jesus!*

**Conclusion** – We will struggle with these things left to ourselves – *We need the example and power of another, namely Christ himself who perfectly wore this outfit and who comes to reside in the believer to make these things possible*

- This text has Jesus all over it – *As he is the true chosen one, the only truly holy one, and He is the beloved of the Father who perfectly put on display kindness and patience and humility*
- **Unbeliever** – You probably realize you have not done these things perfectly AND THAT INDEED MEANS THAT YOU HAVE FALLEN SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD AND THE PUNISHMENT FOR THAT IS SEPARATION FROM GOD but the glorious news of the gospel is that Jesus who did these things perfectly stood in the place of sinners on that cross truly bearing the worst burdens of another their sins so that if you will turn to Him in repentance and faith He will take your sin and He will give you His righteousness!

Believer's paramount for us to consider today is will we be a forgiving people? *We must be people of forgiveness because we have been forgiven much* – And we are called to follow in the steps of the one who when He was reviled did not revile in Return!

- Jesus was betrayed by a close friend and it led to His death but in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross Jesus refused to lash out or respond in violence – *Precisely because He believed in the justice of God a justice that touched down at Golgotha* – We follow the one who entrusted Himself to a God who judges justly!

In the moment when Robbie spit on me I had a choice I can seek justice now on my own or I can entrust judgment to God – *Sadly in that moment I did not walk in the footsteps of Christ one who wasn't only spit on but was beaten and mocked and killed and I began to punch Robbie in the face*

- What my actions were saying in that moment if Robbie was a believer is that I don't really believe Christ's death was enough to forgive that sin and even though God has forgiven Robbie I cannot – *And even though I believe my sins are taken care of at the cross I don't believe the sins done against me were as Jesus drowned in His own blood to forgive that sin!*
- And if Robbie wasn't a Christian I am saying that I don't believe that that sin will be taken care of in judgment I right now must make things right with my fists – *But believer know that one day that eastern skyline will explode in light and Jesus wont need my fists to help Him make things right – As I heard one preacher say essentially on that day what Jesus will be saying to us as He stands there in Mercy, in Grace, and in Justice is, “no need for swords boys I can handle it from here!”*

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL FOR THEY WILL RECEIVE MERCY!