

Ephesians 4:32 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

Ephesians 4:32 **Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you** ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [ginesthe \(2PPMM\)](#) [[de](#)] [eis allelous chrestoi, eusplagchnoi, charizomenoi](#) ([PMPMPN](#)) [heautois kathos kai o theos en Christo echarisato](#) ([3SAMI](#)) [humin](#)

Amplified: And become useful and helpful and kind to one another, tenderhearted (compassionate, understanding, loving-hearted), forgiving one another [readily and freely], as God in Christ forgave you. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

Barclay: Show yourselves kind to one another, merciful, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

NLT: Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: Be kind to each other, be understanding. Be as ready to forgive others as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: And be becoming kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other even as and just as also God in Christ forgave you.

Young's Literal: On the contrary learn to be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ has also forgiven you.

BE KIND TO ONE ANOTHER: ginesthe (2PPMM) [de] eis allelous chrestoi:

- Ruth 2:20; Ps 112:4,5,9; Proverbs 19:22; Isaiah 57:1; Luke 6:35; Acts 28:2; Romans 12:10; 1Corinthians 13:4; 2Corinthians 2:10; 6:6; Colossians 3:12,13; 2Peter 1:7
- [Ephesians 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
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FROM NATURAL VICES TO SUPERNATURAL VIRTUES

John MacArthur aptly entitles this passage "from natural vices to supernatural virtues".

Be ([1096](#)) (**ginomai**) means to bring into existence or to become. This is an interesting picture - bringing kindness to one another **into existence!** What must it have been like before the gospel! Expositors Greek Testament says that the idea of the verb **be** (ginomai) "is that they had to abandon one mental condition and make their way, beginning there and then, into its opposite."

The **present imperative** calls for this to now be their new lifestyle! Keep on becoming kind, etc. The **middle voice** calls for the subject to initiate the action and participate in the results or effects thereof. The idea is keep on becoming. Paul is not calling for an "arrival" in this life but for a lifelong process, a journey toward greater and greater Christlike behavior.

Phillips puts it this way noting that **Kenneth Wuest** translates it "be becoming kind. We might not be able to achieve the kind of total revolution of inner disposition demanded by the Holy Spirit all at once. God is reasonable. He knows our frame. He makes allowance for us to learn and practice, even though we already have the indwelling Holy Spirit to provide the energizing power needed for change. But God does demand that here and now—right away—we **start** putting away the old nature and putting on the new. ([Phillips, John: Exploring Ephesians: An Expository Commentary](#))

Kind (5543) (**chrestos** from **chráomai** = furnish what is needed or from **chresteuomai** = to act kindly) has a basic meaning being well adapted to fulfill a purpose and so describes that which is useful, suitable, excellent, serviceable. It means goodness with a nuance of 'serviceableness.' (as in Luke 5:39 where the old wine is fine or superior for use). **Chrestos** refers to morals in 1Cor 15:33 as those which are useful or benevolent. **Kind** as opposed to harsh, hard, bitter, sharp, caustic!

In several NT verses (Lk 6:35, Ro 2:4-note; Ep 4:32-note; 1Pe 2:3-note) the main idea of **chrestos** is **kind**, an adjective which includes the attributes of loving affection, sympathy, friendliness, patience, pleasantness, gentleness, and goodness. Kindness is a quality shown in the way a person speaks and acts. It is more volitional than emotional.

Matthew Poole - sweet, amiable, facile in words and conversation, Luke 6:35.

Vine writes that **chrestos** "primarily signifies "fit for use, able to be used" (akin to *chraomai*, "to use"), hence, "good, virtuous, mild, pleasant" (in contrast to what is hard, harsh, sharp, bitter). It is said (a) of the character of God as "kind, gracious," Lk 6:35; 1Pe 2:3; "good," Ro 2:4, where the neuter of the adjective is used as a noun, "the goodness" (cp. the corresponding noun *chrestotes*, "goodness," in the same verse); of the yoke of Christ, Mt 11:30, "easy" (a suitable rendering would be "kindly"); (c) of believers, Ephesians 4:32; (d) of things, as wine, Lk 5:39, RV, "good," for AV, "better" (cp. Jer 24:3,5, of figs); (e) ethically, of manners, 1Cor 15:33. ([Easy, Easier, Easily - Vine's Expository Dictionary of NT Words](#))

Chrestos expresses the material usefulness of things with regard to their goodness, pleasantness and softness.

Chrestos was a common proper name of the first century. (See 1Pe 2:3-note).

NIDNTT states in classic use "**chrestos** originally denoted usefulness, and hence what appeared useful, good, suitable and proper (e.g. mild wine). This was very soon followed by the broadening of the concept to include moral excellence and perfection, in which inner greatness was linked with genuine goodness of heart. So *chrestos* meant morally good and honourable, the capacity to show kindness to everyone. Used as a noun, to *chreston* meant a friendly nature, kindness; in the plur. *ta chresta*, kind actions (Herodotus). In the same way the noun, *he chrestotes*, from Euripides on, acquired the meaning of friendliness, kindness, mildness, and was used in inscriptions as a title of honour for rulers and important public figures. ([Brown, Colin, Editor. New International Dictionary of NT Theology. 1986. Zondervan](#))

Barclay writes that **chrestos** was defined by the Greeks...

as the disposition of mind which thinks as much of its neighbour's affairs as it does of its own. **Kindness** has learned the secret of looking outwards all the time, and not inwards. He tells us to forgive others as God forgave us. So, in one sentence, Paul lays down the law of personal relationships—that we should treat others as Jesus Christ has treated us. ([Daily Study Bible](#))

There are two words for good in Greek; there is **agathos** and there is **chrestos**. The difference between them is this. The goodness of a man who is **agathos** may well issue in rebuke and discipline and punishment; but the goodness of a man who is **chrestos** is always essentially kind. Jesus was **agathos** when he drove the moneychangers and the sellers of doves from the Temple in the white heat of his anger. He was **chrestos** when he treated with loving gentleness the sinning woman who anointed his feet and the woman taken in adultery. ([Daily Study Bible](#))

Christ's yoke is called *chrestos* (Mt 11:30), that is, it does not chafe. The whole idea of the word (**chrestos**) is a goodness which is kind. ([Daily Study Bible](#))

He says, "My yoke is easy." The word "easy" is in Greek *chrestos* which can mean well-fitting. In Palestine ox-yokes were made of wood; the ox was brought, and the measurements were taken. The yoke was then roughed out, and the ox wigs brought back to have the yoke tried on. The yoke was carefully adjusted, so that it would fit well, and not gall the neck of the patient beast. The yoke was tailor-made to fit the ox. ([Daily Study Bible](#))

Vincent says **chrestos** is "Actively benignant, "as distinguished from other adjectives which describe goodness on the side of its sterling worth and its gentleness" (Salmond). (Commenting on the use of *chrestos* to describe Jesus' yoke in Mt 11:30 Vincent writes) In Luke 5:39, **chrestos** is used of old wine, where the true reading, instead of better, is good (*chrestos*), mellowed with age. Plato ("Republic," 424) applies the word to education. "*Good nurture and education, implant good (agathos) constitutions; and these good (chrestos) constitutions improve more and more;*"

thus evidently using chrestos and agathos as synonymous. The three meanings combine in the word, though it is impossible to find an English word which combines them all. Christ's yoke is wholesome, serviceable, kindly. (Vincent, M. R. Word Studies in the New Testament)

Chrestos is used 8 times (twice in Romans 2:4) in the NT..

Matthew 11:30 "For My yoke is **easy**, and My load is light."

Comment: Here **chrestos** refers to that which causes no discomfort or does not chafe [rub so as to cause irritation]. It is that which is **well-fitting**. In Palestine ox-yokes were made of wood; the ox was brought, and the measurements were taken. The yoke was then roughed out, and the ox was brought back to have the yoke tried on. The yoke was carefully adjusted, so that it would fit well, and not gall the neck of the patient beast. The yoke was tailor-made to fit the ox. **Ponder** that thought for a moment! Christ's yoke is wholesome, serviceable, kindly. "*Christ's yoke is like feathers to a bird; not loads, but helps to motion*" -- Jeremy Taylor. Chrestos can also mean "pleasant" so that wearing Christ's easy yoke is actually pleasant!

Luke 5:39 "And no one, after drinking old wine wishes for new; for he says, 'The old is **good enough**.'"

Comment: Here **chrestos** refers to that which meets a relatively high standard of value. The nuance here in the context of wine would also include the idea of wine that is mellow, well aged, pleasingly mild.

Luke 6:35 But **love (present imperative)** your enemies, and **do good (present imperative)**, and **lend (present imperative)**, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is **kind** (chrestos) to ungrateful and evil men.

Romans 2:4 (note) Or do you think lightly of the riches of His **kindness** and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the **kindness** of God leads you to repentance?

Comment: Here **chrestos** refers to the beneficent nature of God, His desire to perform acts of kindness and charity. This meaning also applies to His children in Ephesians 4:32 who perform acts of charity because of His life in them and flowing through them.

1Corinthians 15:33 **Do not be deceived** (stop being deceived): "Bad company corrupts **good** morals."

Comment: Here **chrestos** refers to that which morally good and thus which is reputable.

Ephesians 4:32 And be **kind** to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Comment: In experiencing the kindness of the Lord, men are to be like Him in showing kindness towards others.

1 Peter 2:3 (note) if (since) you have tasted (Peter is addressing believers) the **kindness** of the Lord.

Comment: Plato used **chrestos** for food. There also may be a play on words between "kindness" (chrestos) and "Christ" (Christos), two words which were probably pronounced the same at that time. The believers have therefore tasted chrestos, that is, Christ Himself, the Living Word

Chrestos is used 25 times in the **Septuagint (LXX)**

Job 31:31; Ps. 25:8; 34:8; 52:9; 69:16; 86:5; 100:5; 105:45; 106:48; 109:21; 112:5; 119:39, 68; 135:21; 145:9; Prov. 2:21; Jer. 24:2f, 5; 33:11; 44:17; 52:32; Ezek. 27:22; 28:13; Da 2:32; Nah. 1:7

Here are a few representative uses of **chrestos** to **meditate** upon...

Psalm 25:8-note **Good** (chrestos) and upright is the LORD. Therefore He instructs sinners in the way.

Psalm 34:8-note O taste and see that the LORD is **good** (chrestos); How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!

Psalm 86:5-note For Thou, Lord, art **good** (chrestos), and ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon Thee.

Psalm 100:5-note For the LORD is **good** (chrestos); His lovingkindness is everlasting, and His faithfulness to all generations.

Psalm 119:39-note Turn away my reproach which I dread, for Thine ordinances are **good** (chrestos)

Nahum 1:7 The LORD is **good** (chrestos), a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knows those who take refuge in Him.

Boles notes that **chrestos** in this context...

is more than gentle and polite; the word also means "useful" and "serviceable." It has the flavor of action and productivity. God showed his "kindness" to us (Ep 2:7-note) when he took steps to save us. (Boles, K. L.. Galatians & Ephesians. The College Press NIV commentary. Joplin, Mo.: College Press)

Lehman Strauss - Kindness should characterize believers in their relationships with one another. Kindness is that gentle, gracious, easy-to-be-entreated manner that permits others to be at ease in our presence. The word "kind" comes from such words as "kin" and "kindred," so that to deal kindly with others is to deal with them as our own kin. And after all, believers are brethren. Kindness and tender-heartedness go together. They express a warm sympathy and love for all men, both the righteous and evil doers. I fear that sometimes we are not very pitiful and compassionate toward others. Kindness and compassion find expression in forgiveness ([The Conduct and Duty of the Church Ephesians 4-6](#))

One another (240) (**allelon** from **állos** = another) means just what it says. It is like the sequoia trees of California which tower as high as 300 feet above the ground. You might be surprised to discover that these giant trees have unusually shallow root systems that reach out in all directions to capture the greatest amount of surface moisture. Their intertwining roots also provide support for each other against the storms. That's why they usually grow in clusters. Seldom will you see a redwood standing alone, because high winds would quickly uproot it! That's what "one another" means!

Related Resource: Study the "one anothers" - most positive, some negative

Kindness of a Great President - Despite his busy schedule during the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln often visited the hospitals to cheer the wounded. On one occasion he saw a young fellow who was near death. "Is there anything I can do for you?" asked the compassionate President. "Please write a letter to my mother," came the reply. Unrecognized by the soldier, the Chief Executive sat down and wrote as the youth told him what to say. The letter read, "My Dearest Mother, I was badly hurt while doing my duty, and I won't recover. Don't sorrow too much for me. May God bless you and Father. Kiss Mary and John for me." The young man was too weak to go on, so Lincoln signed the letter for him and then added this postscript: "Written for your son by Abraham Lincoln." Asking to see the note, the soldier was astonished to discover who had shown him such kindness. "Are you really our President?" he asked. "Yes," was the quiet answer. "Now, is there anything else I can do?" The lad feebly replied, "Will you please hold my hand? I think it would help to see me through to the end." The tall, gaunt man granted his request, offering warm words of encouragement until death stole in with the dawn.

TENDER-HEARTED: eusplagchnoi:

- Ps 145:9; Proverbs 12:10; Luke 1:78; James 5:11
- [Ephesians 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
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George Morrison gives us a wise reminder that "the great secret of the **tender heart** lies in the fellowship of Jesus Christ (Ed: E.g., the root splanchnizomai is used of Jesus in Mt 9:36 = "felt compassion", cp similar uses of Mt 14:14, 15:32, 20:34). It is a continual wonder about Jesus that He was so strong and yet so tenderhearted. No authority could make Him fearful; no array of power could ever daunt Him, and yet a bruised reed he would not break, and smoking flax He would not quench. He was not tender because He knew so little. He was tender because He knew so

much. All that was hidden from duller eyes He saw--all that men had to bear and battle through. Their helplessness, their crying in the night, their inarticulate appeal to heaven--all this was ever audible to Jesus and kept His heart as tender as a child's. And He never lost this tenderheartedness even in the darkness of the cross. Men scorned Him, and they spat on Him, and crucified Him, yet "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." And what I say is that when that mind of Christ is given by the Spirit to you and me, then whatever happens, however we are treated, we shall be kind one to another, tenderhearted." (George Morrison. Glasgow Pulpit New Testament Commentary)

Tender hearted ([2155](#)) (**eusplagchnos** from **eú** = well + **splagchnon** = bowel) literally means "having strong, healthy bowels" (as used once literally in a medical sense by Hippocrates, 430BC). The inward organs were considered the seat of emotion and intention. The word then means compassionate, easily (quickly) moved to love, pity, or sorrow. It describes one having tender feeling for someone else.

UBS Handbook comments that **eusplagchnos** "may often be expressed idiomatically as "show how your heart feels toward others" or "let your heart go out to others" or "feel sorrow in your heart for others"

The root word **splagchnon** was used by the Greeks to refer to the upper abdominal viscera, the heart, lungs, liver and upper bowels, which the ancients regarded as the seat of affections and emotions, such as anger and love. The phrase "*I feel it in the pit of my stomach*" is a modern parallel. And we all know how that feels! So **splagchnon** refers to that deep, internal caring comparable to the modern expressions of deep feeling such as "broken-hearted" or "gut-wrenching". **Splagchnon** is the strongest Greek word for expressing compassionate love or tender mercy and involves one's entire being. It describes the compassion which moves a man to the deepest depths of his being. In the gospels, apart from its use in some of the parables, it is used only of Jesus

John Eadie - So far from being churlish or waspish, Christians are to be noted for their tenderness of heart. They are to be full of deep and mellow affection, in opposition to that wrath and anger which they are summoned to abandon. A rich and genial sympathy should ever characterize all their intercourse. ([Ephesians 4 Commentary Online](#))

Eusplagchnos not a word about conduct but about your insides -- literally, your innards, your belly. Be well-disposed to each other in your deepest parts. It's exactly the opposite of hypocrisy that acts tender and feels malice.

Webster says that the English word **tender hearted** means easily moved to love, pity, or sorrow

The only other Biblical use of **eusplagchnos** is "1Pe 3:8 (see note) To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, **kindhearted**, and humble in spirit;

FORGIVING EACH OTHER, JUST AS GOD IN CHRIST ALSO HAS FORGIVEN YOU: charizomenoi (PMPMPN) heautois kathos kai o theos en Christo echarisato (3SAMI) humin:

- Ep 5:1; Ge 50:17,18; Mt 6:12,14,15; 18:21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35; Mk 11:25,26; Lk 6:37; 11:4; 17:4; Ro 12:20,21; 2Co 2:7,10; Col 3:12,13; 1Pe 3:8,9; 1Jn 1:9; 2:12
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THE DESTRUCTIVE SPECTRUM OF AN UNFORGIVING SPIRIT

The spectrum of unforgiveness includes all manner of insults and injuries we receive that result in reactions varying from **resentment** to **grudges** to **bitterness** to **overt anger**. All of these self-destructive feelings (eg, bitterness is an "acid" that damages the "container" as much or more than those it is poured on) need to be dealt with at the Cross where our forgiveness was **paid for in full** (Jn 19:30-note where "It is finished" = "Paid in full" = **Tetelestai!**). It follows that the mighty Cross is the fountain head of ALL supernatural (true) forgiveness.

While forgiveness may entail just one act on our part, often forgiveness is a **process** as the painful thoughts and feelings recur and we find ourselves needing to repeat this divinely enabled act of forgiveness "seven times seventy". It is vital that we as the body of Christ deal with the poison of an unforgiving spirit for this is one of the

most common problems in evangelical churches today, which produces the putrid "fruits" of disunity, divorce, disappointment, etc (according to Bryon Paulus, director of [Life Action Ministries](#), a revival focused ministry).

Jesus presumably addressed believers in Matthew 18:21-35 in the parable of the unforgiving steward. Believers are implied by the fact that Jesus called for "seven times seventy" forgiveness in Mt 18:22, a quality only possible in one energized by the Holy Spirit. In the parable our Lord concluded that the unforgiving person is the one who shows no mercy (Mt 18:33, cp Jas 2:13, Mt 5:7) and who would be turned over to the torturers "until he should repay all that was owed" (Mt 18:34, read the entire parable Mt 18:21-35). Note the "**time phrase**" *until*. *Until* can be a few minutes, a few months or many years, even a lifetime. How often we hear stories of unresolved relationships lasting a lifetime, only to be dealt with (or not dealt with) on one's death bed! Unforgiveness is a topic with which the body of Christ must seriously address.

John MacArthur commenting on Jesus' parable in Mt 18 concludes that our Lord...

vividly drives home the importance of forgiveness in the Christian life (in) the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant. In this passage Jesus' teaching underscores not only the necessity of forgiveness but also the imperative that if God, Who has received the greater offense, can forgive us, then believers, who have been offended far less, must forgive fellow believers. (**Ed**: cp Lk 7:40, 41, 42, 43,47)... When God does need to chasten believers for any grievous sin, it is perfectly evenhanded, more so than any king's punishment could be. The Lord, while always angry at sin, disciplines his own because He loves them (He 12:6-note, He 12:10-note, He 12:11-note). If they forget the forgiveness they've received (as the first slave did) and refuse to forgive fellow believers, God causes them to endure such "torturers" as stress, hardships, troubled consciences, and other trials until they deal with the sin. James says: "Judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy" (Jas 2:13).

I believe the lesson of the parable is clear: any believer who offends a fellow believer has offended God much more, and God has forgiven him; therefore, the offended believer should always be willing to forgive the brother or sister who sins against him or her and asks to be forgiven. Christians must always reflect God's forgiveness because they have experienced that same forgiveness.

Genuine forgiveness, however, does not excuse the wrongs of others. Compassion and mercy will not rationalize an offense away but will always call it what it is. But in confronting a sin, the forgiving believer will eliminate bitterness and all other negative feelings that can only increase the sin rather than eliminate it. Then he or she can confidently and sincerely pray the familiar prayer, "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matt. 6:12-**see notes on forgiveness related to this passage**). (MacArthur, J. The Pillars of Christian Character: The Basic Essentials of a Living Faith. Page 88. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books)

The subsequent verses in Ephesians 5 draw a conclusion based on Paul's instructions at the end of chapter 4 (which is why I think chapter breaks can sometimes distract from the flow of thought)...

Therefore (term of conclusion - What's Paul concluding? What has he just said in Eph 4:32?) **be** (present imperative) **imitators** (mimetes = One who **mimes** = acts a part with mimic gesture and action usually without words Let your actions speak louder than your words) of God, as beloved children and **walk** (present imperative) in love, just as (Paul introduces our great **Example** we are to seek to imitate) Christ also loved you (**How did He love us? How much?**), and gave Himself up (the ultimate surrender of self or death to self) for us (in place of "for" we could also insert "in our place" which depicts substitution), an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. (Eph 5:1,2-note)

Comment: So Christ is the pattern we are to imitate. Notice the two commands (be, walk) which are both present imperatives which call for this imitation to be our daily practice! Just attempt to imitate Jesus in your own power! It is impossible. But it is "Him" possible! We must daily choose to renounce self-reliance and to wholly rely on the indwelling Spirit, Who "energizes" us supernaturally by giving us the DESIRE and the POWER to walk in a manner which is pleasing to our Father (see Php 2:13NLT-note) We are not teaching "Let go and let God" but "Let God and Let's go!" for Php 2:12-note teaches that our responsibility is to work out what the Spirit works in!

Expositor's Greek Testament: The "*therefore* points to the same connection of ideas...and the

one most immediately in view is that of the forgiveness of those who wrong us—a forgiveness which should be free, loving, ungrudging, complete as God's forgiveness is.

Forgiving ("given as an act of grace") ([5483](#)) (**charizomai** [**word study**] from **charis**= grace) means literally to give freely and unconditionally or to bestow as a gift of grace and then to remit a debt, and hence to forgive. Look at the word "forgive" and observe the last 4 letters which speak volumes about what is required to forgive others (for **GIVE**). **Charizomai** means to extend grace, to show kindness or to bestow favor. The concept came to include both the gracious action and agreeable human qualities. The **present tense** calls for this to be the believer's continual practice, our new way of life (our "new garment" worn continually) as **saints**. Don't say you **can't** forgive, for what you are really saying is you **won't** forgive. We **can** forgive others because He **forgave** us! As an act of **mercy** make the conscious choice to extend **grace** to others who don't necessarily deserve it. In fact Paul uses the **Middle voice** which pictures believers as those who are to initiate the action of forgiving and then to participate in the results of forgiveness, not the least of which is we free ourselves from the "**prison**" and "**poison**" of **unforgiveness!**

Another way to explain the tense using the context of Paul's exhortation to put on new garments, the **present tense** pictures that those who have **put off** the old man and **put on** the new man and now are to wear this "garment" at all times and in all places. The **middle voice** indicates that we as new men (and women of course) in Christ are to initiate the decision to put on the "garment of forgiveness" and that we participate in the effects of this new "attire" (the freedom that comes by living with an attitude of letting the injuries of others go, of remitting the debts they owe us).

I found a little remedy
To ease the life we **live**
And make each day a happier one:
It is the word "**forgive**."
—Anonymous

By the very nature of the word **charizomai** (from **charis** = grace) requires one to be a **grace** (Spirit) **filled believer** (Eph 5:18) in order to fulfill the requirement to forgive freely, graciously and ungrudgingly (a supernatural, Spirit empowered work! Little wonder that earlier Paul had prayed the Ephesian saints would be "strengthened with power [**dunamis**] through God's Spirit in the inner man" = Eph 3:16-note). Stated another way, **charizomai** represents the exercise of grace in freely forgiving.

Geneva Bible Notes (1599) - "An argument taken from the example of Christ, most grave and strong, both for the pardoning of those injuries which have been done to us by our greatest enemies, and much more for having consideration of the miserable, and using moderation and gentle behaviour towards all men."

Pfeiffer says that "The only way we can be enabled to forgive is through the forgiveness which we ourselves already have received for Christ's sake (**Ed**: And which is "dispensed" by the Spirit of Christ). As God's love produces our love, so our realization of God's forgiveness produces our forgiveness of others (**Ed**: Enabled of course by the Holy Spirit). (cf. 1Jn 4:19)."

The People's Bible - What our Father has done—that makes all the difference in the world! His actions not only set a pattern and serve as a model, but they give loveless sinners new hearts and new minds. It is God who creates the new man in Christians, who now have the power and the ability to forgive a repentant brother or sister (**Ed**: And even those who don't repent!). And Christians will do it. They will not merely go through the motions but will forgive sincerely—from their hearts. They can do so because they are now living lives of love, in imitation of their heavenly Father. "We love because he first loved us" (1Jn 4:19). (Panning, A. J. Galatians, Ephesians. The People's Bible Milwaukee, Wis.: Northwestern Pub. House)

Warren Wiersbe - Here Paul put his finger on the basic cause of a bitter attitude: We cannot forgive people. An unforgiving spirit is the **devil's playground** (cp Ep 4:26, 27-note), and before long it becomes the **Christian's battleground**. If somebody hurts us, either deliberately or unintentionally, and we do not forgive him, then we begin to develop bitterness within, which hardens the heart. We should be tenderhearted and kind, but instead we are hardhearted and bitter. Actually, we are not hurting the person who hurt us; we are only hurting ourselves. Bitterness in the heart makes us treat others the way Satan treats them, when we should treat others the way God has treated us. In His gracious kindness, God has forgiven us, and we should forgive others. We do not forgive for our sake (though we do get a blessing from it) or even for their sake, but for Jesus' sake. **Learning how to forgive and forget is one of the secrets of a happy Christian life. Review once again the motives for "walking in**

purity": We are members one of another (Ep 4:25-note); Satan wants to get a foothold in our lives (Ep 4:27- note); we ought to share with others (Ep 4:28-note); we ought to build one another up (Ep 4:29- note); and we ought not to grieve God (Ep 4:30-note). And, after all, we have been raised from the dead—so why wear the grave clothes? (Ep 4:22-note, Ep 4:23-note) Jesus says of us as He said of Lazarus: "Loose him, and let him go!" (Jn 11:44KJV) ([Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor](#)) (Bolding and color added for emphasis)

Each other ([1438](#)) (**heautois**) is the third third person reflexive pronoun which in this context emphasizes the fact that believers are all members of Christ's body—everyone members one of another. As Alford phrases it "Doing as a body for yourselves that which God did once for you all"

DOCTRINE PRECEDES DUTY

Just as God in Christ has forgiven us (cp Col 2:13-note) - The underlying motive (and power) for believers to forgive others is God's action through Christ toward us (cp 1Jn 3:16) and the gift of His Spirit Who enables us. The believer's **duty** (even privilege) is to forgive, based on the **doctrine** that we have been forgiven. **Revelation** always calls for a **response** from the heart (cp Mt 18:35). If the revelation remains in the head, we run the risk of becoming modern day Pharisees, hearers but not doers of truth. What we **believe** should always determine how we **behave**. If we **believe** (and comprehend to some degree the measure of) God's immeasurable forgiveness, we should **behave** according to that truth in which we trust.

As someone has said, God's **imperatives** (commands, instructions) are always preceded by His **indicatives** (mood of reality = statement of objective fact).

It follows that we as God's children are most like our Father when we exercise the Spirit enabled, supernatural grace of forgiving those who have offended us and in a sense owe us a "debt". The old adage is appropriate "Like Father, like son." As sons (and daughters) we are to accurately reflect His character, especially His gift of unconditional forgiveness, to a lost, skeptical and cynical world which desperately needs to see God's love in action vis-à-vis forgiveness freely given to those who don't deserve it! (cp Mt 5:16-note, Php 2:15-note).

THE CRUCIAL QUALIFYING PHRASE

Just as ([2531](#)) (**kathos** from **kata** = down + **hos** = as) is a marker of cause or reason and here designates the grounds on which believers are enabled and (should be) motivated to forgive others. It conveys the sense of "in the same way as", "just like", "according as", "to the degree that". Meditate on this transformative truth! It should serve as a strong motive to supernaturally stimulate us to forgive those who have wronged us!

In Christ - The idea can be expressed as "through Christ", conveying the sense of Christ's finished work being the means ("instrumentality") through which the Father can now forgive sinners. Some take "in Christ" as alluding to our union or oneness with Christ and so render this phrase "in your union with Christ." **UBS** adds that "Most translations, which simply have "God in Christ," seem to take it in the sense that God is present in Christ, that is, he is active, working, forgiving, in Christ's person." (Ibid)

Wuest interprets **in Christ** as meaning that "It is the God Who forgives in the sphere of Christ in that His forgiveness is made possible from the point of the law, through the atonement." (Ibid)

Christ ([5547](#)) (**Christos** from **chrío** = to anoint, rub with oil, consecrate to an office) is the Anointed One, the Messiah, Christos being the Greek equivalent of the transliterated Hebrew word Messiah. As a Jew learned the Torah, now the Christian learns Christ!

Pardon from an offended God!
Pardon for sins of deepest dye!
Pardon bestowed through Jesus' blood!
Pardon that brings the rebel nigh!

Who is a pard'ning God like thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?

O may this glorious, matchless love,

This Godlike miracle of grace,
Teach mortal tongues, like those above,
To raise this song of lofty praise:

Who is a pard'ning God like thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?
--Samuel Davies

Has Forgiven (5483) (**charizomai** [word study] from **charis** = grace) speaks of the exhibition of God's grace in providing undeserved help to those who were unworthy to receive it. Note that **charizomai** is in the **aoist tense** which signifies God's forgiveness of sinners in Christ is full, final and finished. This is the standard of forgiveness by which believers are to model their forgiveness of those who injure them in thought, word or deed.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones - I say to the glory of God and in utter humility that whenever I see myself before God and realize even something of what my blessed Lord has done for me, I am ready to forgive anybody anything...If we really know Christ as our Saviour our hearts are broken and cannot be hard, and we cannot refuse forgiveness

Lehman Strauss comments that "Perhaps the one who wronged you does not deserve your forgiveness. Neither did you deserve God's forgiveness. ([The Conduct and Duty of the Church Ephesians 4-6](#))

William MacDonald explains that **charizomai** expresses "A readiness to pardon offenses, to overlook personal wrongs against oneself, and to harbor no desire for retaliation. The greatest example of One who forgives is God Himself. The basis of His forgiveness is the work of Christ at Calvary. And we are the unworthy objects. God could not forgive sin without proper satisfaction being made. In His love He provided the satisfaction which His righteousness demanded. In Christ, that is, in His Person and work, God found a righteous basis on which He could forgive us. **Since He forgave us when we were in debt "millions of dollars," we ought to forgive others when they owe us "a few dollars"** (Mt 18:23-28). **Lenski** counsels "The moment a man wrongs me I must forgive him. Then my soul is free. If I hold the wrong against him I sin against God and against him and jeopardize my forgiveness with God (**Ed**: cf Mt 6:12, 14-15). Whether the man repents, makes amends, asks my pardon or not, makes no difference. I have instantly forgiven him. He must face God with the wrong he has done; but that is his affair and God's and not mine save that I should help him according to Mt. 18:15, etc. But whether this succeeds or not and before this even begins, I must forgive him." ([MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

S Lewis Johnson comments on **forgiveness** writing "we should remember that we are to forgive one another, because God for Christ's sake has forgiven you. Anyone who has been cleared of a crushing debt, should not exact payment of pittance of others. And so the Apostle reminds believers that they ought to forgive one another because God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us. Just think about it. **Are there people that you find it difficult to forgive?** Are there people that you have, for a long time found it difficult to forgive? Some little thing that they've done, or some big thing that they've done - you think it's big. And you allow this to go on for days and days and weeks months, and in some cases, even years. And this is lying in the back of your life for months, days, years. Now would you just for a moment measure the wrong that has been done to you by - and what it would cost to forgive -against the wrongs you have done to the Lord God, and the forgiveness that has been your experience? Forgiving one another as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you. Well, listen, I've been forgiven a crushing, eternal debt. So, the little wrongs that someone may have committed against me, sometimes they're not really wrongs, but I think they are. Those little wrongs that have been done to me, how small they are in light of what I have been forgiven. Forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you. Many people bury the hatchet, but they leave part of it showing. In fact, I think you really could say, about a lot of people, when they speak about others - I'm speaking about the Christian church - you're hatchet's showing. ([Ephesians 4:25-5:2 The Christian's Use of the Tongue](#))

R C Lenski - Let us put this plainly since even pastors misunderstand it. The moment a man wrongs me I must forgive him. Then my soul is free. If I hold the wrong against him I sin against God and against him and jeopardize my forgiveness with God. Whether the man repents, makes amends, asks my pardon or not, makes no difference. I have instantly forgiven him. He must face God with the wrong he has done; but that is his affair and God's and not mine save that in the case he is a brother I should help him according to Mt 18:15, etc. But whether this succeeds or not and before this even begins I must forgive him. (Lenski, R. C. H. (1937). The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians. Columbus, O.: Lutheran Book Concern)

ILLUSTRATION - When missionaries in northern Alaska were translating the Bible into the language of the Eskimos, they discovered there was no word in that language for **forgiveness**. After much patient listening, however, they

discovered a word that means, “**not being able to think about it anymore**” That word was used throughout the translation to represent **forgiveness**, because God’s promise to repentant sinners is, “I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jer. 31:34).

J Ligon Duncan has a good word on this section...

We’re going to do it (forgive) because we have realized that that is exactly what God has done to us. He has been kind to us when we have not deserved to be kind to. He has been forgiving of us when we did not deserve forgiveness. And so you see, the Apostle Paul is saying ‘This is the key, friends.’ It is only when you realize that you are the recipient of a kindness that you did not deserve, it is only when you realize that you are the recipient of a forgiveness that you did not deserve, that you are then suddenly freed from the power of your bitterness to realize that God has been better to you than you dared dream; and that in His love and kindness and goodness to you, He has set you free to be kind to those who don’t deserve to be kind to in this life, and to forgive those who have deeply offended you and who don’t deserve to be forgiven. He’s freed you! How? By simply telling you to do it? No. By showing you His love and kindness and forgiveness first, and showing it to you in such a lavish way that it literally changes your life.

You know, Jesus tells a story of a woman just like that. Back in Luke again, it’s in Luke 7. It’s the story of that immoral woman, a woman with a terrible reputation in the community, and she shows up at the house where Jesus is staying one day, and she begins to anoint His feet. And the Pharisees that are there are indignant: ‘If this man were really a prophet, he’d know what kind of a woman was touching his feet!’ And you remember Jesus turns to them and He says ‘Let me tell you a story.’ And He tells them a story, and the punch line is found in Luke 7:47. And He says ‘You know what? This woman loves much because she has been forgiven much, and you love little because you have been forgiven little.’

In other words, Jesus is attacking their attitude. They didn’t think they needed forgiveness, and consequently they didn’t love Him like they ought to. But this woman knew that she needed forgiveness, and she had received the gracious forgiveness of Jesus Christ, and she loved Him with all her heart. It had radically changed her life.

And you see, Paul’s point, as Jesus’ point, is simply this: that those who have been forgiven much are able to love and forgive much. Those who realize that they have been forgiven much by God in Christ are thus disposed to love much and are prepared to forgive. So the secret of not living this life of bitterness and instead living this life of kindness and forgiveness, is realizing the grace of God to us in Jesus Christ.

And if you haven’t realized the greatness of this grace, I can tell you, my friends, you can’t do what the Apostle Paul is asking you to do this morning. In that area of your deepest wounding in this life, there has just got to be more than some pundit’s standing up and telling you ‘Stop being bitter. Start being kind and forgiving.’ There’s got to be more. There’s got to be a prevailing, supernatural, overwhelming experience of the forgiveness and love of God in your life in Christ Jesus. But when that prevailing, powerful, supernatural, experience of the love of God, the forgiveness of God, the kindness of God in Christ comes, it sets us free to stop being turned in on ourselves and nurse our bitterness, and to deny ourselves and give ourselves away in love and forgiveness.

And that’s what the Apostle Paul is saying today. He’s saying that we’re to be kind and forgiving to one another, precisely because we realize how kind and forgiving God our Father has been to us in Jesus Christ. (Read his full sermon message [Bitterness, Forgiveness, and Being Like God](#))

Chuck Swindoll (quoted by Ligon Duncan) had these insightful words on attitude - The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude to me is more important than facts, it’s more important than the past, it’s more important than education, it’s more important than money, circumstances, failures, successes. It’s more important than what other people think or say or do. It’s more important than appearance, giftedness, or skill. It will make or break a company, a church, or a home. The remarkable thing is that we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace. We cannot change our past. We cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string that we have, and that is our attitude. I’m convinced that life is ten percent of what happens to me and ninety percent of how I react to it.

Wayne Barber...

Let's look at the wellspring that we have in Christ. What a difference! Again he puts the source at the end of the verse. Look at what he says - "And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

All the **forgiveness** that we are able to show towards others is wrapped up in the person of Jesus Christ. You have the "wellspring of life" on one side. You have the cesspool of death on the other side. You have a choice of which garment you are going to put on. It is a constant thing every single day of our life.

Paul says, "Be kind to one another." The word "**kindness**" (See related word chrestotes) is the word that means to furnish what is needed. In other words, the **kindness** here means I am useful to others. My **kindness** is going to express itself in the need that I perceive as I am around others. This kindness is not just an attitude inside. It is an expression of that attitude. I may see somebody hurting, or you may see them. I am not responsible for everybody and neither are you. You are responsible for what is in the sphere of your relationships and I am responsible for what is in the sphere of my relationships. When I begin to discern that somebody close to me is hurting, then immediately the kindness of Jesus turns on and is going to reach out to that person to do something. Whatever is useful and needful is what kindness is all about. That is Christ working in us, being considerate of one another, concerned for one another.

TENDER-HEARTED

The next word he uses there is the word **tender-hearted**. What a tender word. The word means to be full of compassion and pity. You know, the best people to help somebody else are people who have been there themselves. Paul says,

"Comfort wherein you have been comforted."

It is amazing how God will orchestrate your life and bring people into your walk who are going through the very thing you have just gone through two years back. It is amazing how God does that. Somehow He begins through His own working in our spirit, to create within us a compassion for other people because we have been there and we know what they are headed for or we know what they are going through. The compassion of Jesus then begins to reach out to that person.

FORGIVING

Well, the last quality is **forgiving one another**. I think it involves a choice one makes to forgive. Now remember, injury is still the issue. Somebody has injured you and the old garment says,

Be bitter and loud and angry. Blow up and be slanderous and abuse them with what you say about them.

The new garment says,

No. You make a choice. Forgive them.

The word for "**forgiveness**" is **charizomai [word study]**. It means to release them from a debt they owe and which they can never repay to you. They have offended you to the point they could never come back and "repay" you for what they have done to you. But, you choose in Jesus (**Ed**: In the power supplied by the Spirit of Christ, cp Eph 3:16-note) to release them from that obligation.

Paul finishes up and qualifies it,

just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

You may ask,

You mean to tell me you work yourself into a position that you finally deserve God's forgiveness in your life?

No. I am overwhelmed that God even deals with me. I mean daily I am overwhelmed. Some of the things I think and some of the things I do sometimes I wonder...

"God, why do you even fool with me?"

In Psalm 8:4 David said...

What is man, that Thou dost take thought of him?

Folks, listen, when we realize how much He has forgiven us, we can turn around and, out of that wellspring of His person and His Spirit's strengthening in our inner man, choose to release someone who has offended us.

The next thing we are going to sense in our life is a tender-hearted compassion. Then we are going to sense a kindness that is going to start looking out to see how we can meet that need in our brother or sister's lives.

Now I ask you a question. Which garment would you rather have people wear? I know which one I want everybody to put on, the one that forgives and is kind. But you see, I can't make choices for you. I can only make choices for me. So tomorrow when we get up, we have one of two garments to put on. One of them is rooted in the cesspool of self. The other is rooted in the wellspring of Christ. That is when the prayer of Ephesians 3:14-21 comes back in, to be strengthened with power. What is the word "power?" (**dunamis**) **It is the ability to do what you couldn't do outside of Him in the inner man.** You accommodate Him by your willingness to choose and obey what His Word has to say. Then your relationships begin to be what they ought to be. (**Ephesians 4:31-32: A Brand New Way of Life - 5**)

John Henry Jowett has the following devotional entitled "**Grudges**" (based on Lev 19:18) in which he alludes to the importance of **forgiveness**...

HOW searching is that demand upon the soul (referring to Lev 19:18)! My **forgiveness** of my brother is to be complete. No sullenness is to remain, no sulky temper which so easily gives birth to thunder and lightning. There is to be no painful aloofness, no assumption of a superiority which rains contempt upon the offender. When I **forgive**, I am not to carry any powder forward on the journey. I am to empty out all my explosives, all my ammunition of anger and revenge. I am not to "**bear any grudge.**"

I cannot meet this demand. It is altogether beyond me. I might utter words of **forgiveness**, but I cannot reveal a clear, bright, blue sky without a touch of storm brewing anywhere. But the Lord of grace can do it for me. He can change my weather. He can create a new climate. He can "renew a right spirit within me," (Ps 51:10KJV Ed comment: And I must be enabled by the Spirit Who alone can give the desire and power to forgive the way God forgave me! Php 2:13NLT) and in that holy atmosphere nothing shall live which seeks to poison and destroy. Grudges shall die "like cloud-spots in the dawn." Revenge, that awful creation of the unclean, feverish soul, shall give place to goodwill, the strong genial presence which makes its home in the new heart. (Devotional - February 13)

THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS - A life filled with anger — a church full of angry people — is a **pain to the Spirit** (Ep 4:30-note). He will not work, indeed cannot, for he abides by his own laws. The great evangelist D. L. Moody related a story which demonstrates this truth:

I remember one town that Mr. Sankey and I visited. For a week it seemed as if we were beating the air; there was no power in the meetings. At last, one day, I said that perhaps there was someone cultivating the **unforgiving spirit**. The chairman of our committee, who was sitting next to me, got up and left the meeting right in view of the audience. The arrow had hit the mark, and gone home to the heart of the chairman of the committee. He had had trouble with someone for about six months. He at once hunted up this man and asked him to forgive him. He came to me with tears in his eyes, and said: "I thank God you ever came here." That night the inquiry room was thronged.

We must deal with our anger for the sake of our own souls and the life of the Church. ([Hughes, R. K.: Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ. Crossway Books](#))

Sam Storms has some interesting thoughts on myths and truths related to forgiveness...

There is considerable confusion among Christians as to the nature of forgiveness. I want to list five myths about forgiveness, followed by five truths.

First, myths about forgiveness:

1) Forgiveness is not forgetting.

Why? Because: (a) God does not forget, notwithstanding what you think Jer. 31:34 is saying. This is a metaphor, a word picture, designed to emphasize God's gracious determination not to hold us liable for our sins. (b) It is intellectually and mentally impossible to forget. Try to forget and you can be assured you will remember! (c) It is experientially devastating. Once having successfully "forgotten an offense," any occasion that provokes the memory of it can lead to guilt and shame and depression for having failed so miserably to forget. One becomes unwilling ever to forgive, knowing that they will in all likelihood remember.

2) Forgiveness does not entail the absence of feeling pain.

(a) The only way to stop hurting is to stop feeling and the only way to stop feeling is to die emotionally.

(b) This myth is one of the primary reasons people refuse to forgive. They know they can't stop feeling the sting of the sin and they don't want to be hypocrites.

3) Forgiveness does not mean you cease longing for justice.

Vengeance is not a bad thing. If it were, God would be guilty of a sin (see Ro 12:19- note). It's simply that He's better at it than we are. Leave it to Him. Forgiveness does not mean you ignore that a wrong was done or deny that sin was committed. It simply means you decide to let God be the avenger. One reason people refuse to forgive is that they believe to do so would be to minimize the offense . . . "and that's not fair!"

4) Forgiveness does not mean you make it easy for the offender to hurt you again

He or she may hurt you again. That is their choice. But you must set boundaries on your relationship with them. True love never aids and abets the sin of another. True forgiveness is not incompatible with holding a person accountable for their actions and calling them to repent. Forgiveness does not mean you become a doormat for someone else's sin.

5) Forgiveness is rarely a one-time, climactic event.

It is often a life-long process. It may well begin with an act, but it often requires reaffirmation.

Second, truths about forgiveness.

Paul says we are to forgive "as God in Christ also has forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32). The "as" points to two things: we are to forgive "because God forgave us" and "as or in the same way He forgave us." So how did God forgive us?

1) He forgave us by absorbing in himself the destructive and painful consequences of our sin against him.

Forgiveness is therefore the decision to live with the painful consequences of another person's sin. You are going to have to do so anyway, so you might as well do it without the bitterness and rancor and hatred.

2) God forgave us in Christ by canceling the debt we owed him.

We are no longer held liable for our sins or in any way made to pay for them. To forgive someone thus means you promise not to bring it up to the offender, to others, or to yourself, as a way of using it against them.

3) Forgiving others as God has forgiven us means you resolve to revoke revenge.

It means you refuse to let the anger and pain energize an agenda to exact payment, be it emotional, relational, physical, or financial. You cancel the debt by refusing to use past suffering to justify present sin.

4) Forgiving others as God has forgiven us means a determination to do them good

rather than evil. See Ro12:20, 21-note.

5) God forgave us in Christ by reconciling us to himself, by restoring the relationship our sin had severed.

True forgiveness pursues restoration. True forgiveness longs to love again. However, relationship is built on trust, and trust is not built in a day. Also, restoration and reconciliation are not always possible. Said Paul: "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men" (Ro 12:18-note). ([Ephesians 4:17-32](#)) (**Ed comment:** While reconciliation is the ideal, forgiveness takes only one person, while reconciliation takes two parties. Thus we can personally forgive and yet may not see realization of reconciliation.)

BURYING THE HATCHET - Old Joe was dying. For years he had been at odds with Bill, formerly one of his best friends. Wanting to straighten things out, he sent word for Bill to come and see him. When Bill arrived, Joe told him that he was afraid to go into eternity with such a bad feeling between them. Then, very reluctantly and with great effort, Joe apologized for things he had said and done. He also assured Bill that he **forgave him** for his offenses. Everything seemed fine until Bill turned to go. As he walked out of the room, Joe called out after him, "But, remember, if I get better, this doesn't count!"

We may smile at this story. Yet what a clear picture this gives of the way we sometimes treat one another. The forgiveness we profess is often superficial (Ed: Not from the heart, Mt 18:35, Ezek 36:26, 27). It may be prompted by fear, or to gain some selfish advantage, or to clear our conscience--not out of genuine love for God (cf Lk 7:41, 42) and the one who has wronged us. Yes, we may say we forgive, but when the least little friction arises, we are quick to resurrect past grievances (cf God's forgiveness - Isa 38:7, 44:22, Mic 7:19). In short, **we like to "bury the hatchet" with the handle sticking out.** That way we can easily pick it up again and use it to our advantage. How different is the forgiveness Jesus talked about! (Mt 18:15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22).

If our sinless Lord is willing to forgive us--with all our faults--how can we withhold pardon from those who have sinned against us? True Christlike forgiveness buries the hatchet completely.

Those who say they will forgive but can't forget,
simply bury the hatchet but leave the handle out for immediate use.

--D. L. Moody

Every man should have a fair-sized cemetery
in which to bury the faults of his friends.

--Henry Ward Beecher

Christ the Lord our debt has paid—
All our sins on Him were laid;
We like Him should try to live,
Always ready to forgive! —Bosch

**To resent and remember brings strife;
To forgive and forget brings peace.**

For Further Thought - **What happens to your fellowship with God when you hold a grudge?** (Mt 6:15-note). **Can you think of someone you need to forgive?**

For Further Thought - **What happens to your fellowship with God when you hold a grudge?** (see Mt 6:15-note). **Can you think of someone you need to forgive? If not would you be willing to pray David's heart searching plea in Ps 139:23, 24?** Forgiveness (releasing the "debt" the other party owes you) will "cost" you -- you will have to deny self (Mk 8:34), to deny "your rights" (Php 2:4-note), something that you can only do after you have presented your body (everything - spirit, soul, mind, emotions, will, etc) to God as a holy sacrifice, for then His Spirit will enable you by grace to freely forgive for the glory of your Father in heaven.

Garth Brooks has a song which says "**We buried the hatchet, but left the handle sticking out.**" One great obstacle of stumbling is non-forgiveness. The hatchet might seem to be buried, but people continue to grab hold of the handle when they want to use it against another. Jesus said if a brother repents, forgive him--that is, bury the hatchet and its handle. How many times, you might ask? As often as the brother repents, we are to forgive (Lk 17:3, 4- where "forgive" = **aphiemi [word study]** meaning release it, cancel the debt, let it go!). Don't grab hold of

buried hatchet handles, for they become stumbling blocks to forgiveness.

WHEN FORGIVENESS SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE - Corrie ten Boom, author of *The Hiding Place*, was taken captive and spent time in Nazi concentration camps during World War II. While in prison, Corrie saw incredible abuse, so inhumane that it drove the prisoners to incredible depths, including intentionally allowing lice to breed on their bodies because the more lice they had, the less likely it would be that the guards would molest them! And Corrie even witnessed the death of her own dear sister.

After the war, God sent Corrie ten Boom on a mission of mercy through the war-torn cities to encourage residents to choose **forgiveness** over **bitterness**. She would motivate her audiences by sharing some of the atrocities she had experienced, implying that if she could forgive such horrors, so could her listeners. One night speaking, she immediately recognized the man who came walking down the aisle as a particularly cruel guard in one of the concentration camps. The man did not recognize her however. As he approached Corrie he said...

Fraulein, you don't know me, but I was a guard in one of those camps. After the war, God saved me. I wish I could go back and undo those years. I can't, but I've just been prompted by God to come tonight and ask you, **would you please forgive me?**

Then he extended his hand to her. Can you imagine the horrible thoughts and memories that raced through Corrie's mind as she recognized his face and then even worse, heard his incredible plea for forgiveness? How could she? Corrie said her arms froze at her side and she was literally unable to move. The flashbacks in her mind replaying the atrocities, the death of her sister, the abuse. And then God's Spirit said to her,

Corrie, what have you been telling everyone else to do? As an act of your will, will you choose to forgive?

Corrie went on to explain what happened next...

I reached out my hand, and I put it in his, and I said, 'You're forgiven.'

She later reported that at that moment...

It was like a dam broke loose—all the bitterness and resentment—and God set me free.

Indeed Jesus said that if we abide in His Word, we would know the truth and that the truth would set us free. (Jn 8:31, 32) But "abiding" (continuing) in His Word is not simply **hearing** His Word or even just **knowing** His Word, but most critically includes **obeying** His Word. When we know the truth about what God says about **forgiveness** and make the conscious choice (impelled and empowered by His Spirit and His amazing grace sufficient for our every weakness, 2Co 12:9-note, 2Co 12:10-note), we will be set free by the Son and when He frees us we are free indeed. Remember that this freedom is not the right to do as you would, but the power to obey as you ought. (Jn 8:31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36)

Later Corrie said...

You never so touch the ocean of God's love as when you forgive and love your enemies.

ARE YOU STILL RINGING THE BELL? - Corrie ten Boom told of not being able to forget a wrong that had been done to her. She had forgiven the person, but she kept rehashing the incident and so couldn't sleep. Finally Corrie cried out to God for help in putting the problem to rest. "His help came in the form of a kindly Lutheran pastor," Corrie wrote, "to whom I confessed my failure after two sleepless weeks." "Up in the church tower," he said, nodding out the window, "is a bell which is rung by pulling on a rope. But you know what? After the sexton lets go of the rope, the bell keeps on swinging. First ding, then dong. Slower and slower until there's a final dong and it stops. I believe the same thing is true of forgiveness. When we forgive, we take our hand off the rope. But if we've been tugging at our grievances for a long time, we mustn't be surprised if the old angry thoughts keep coming for a while. They're just the ding-dongs of the old bell slowing down." "And so it proved to be. There were a few more midnight reverberations, a couple of dings when the subject came up in my conversations, but the force -- which was my willingness in the matter -- had gone out of them. They came less and less often and at the last stopped altogether: we can trust God not only above our emotions, but also above our thoughts."

The Cycle Of Forgiveness - Perhaps you've seen the Vietnam War picture of Kim Phuc, a 9-year-old girl running naked in terror from her village, hoping to escape the horror of napalm that was burning her skin. The day was June

8, 1972. The pilot of the South Vietnamese plane was carrying out orders to bomb enemy troop positions in the village of Trang Bang.

Twenty-four years later, Kim Phuc was invited to Washington in 1996 to speak at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and to place a wreath of flowers to honor the US troops who had given their lives during the war. Kim had said previously that if she could talk to the pilot who dropped the napalm on her, she would forgive him. The person who introduced Kim stated, "An innocent victim of war, she holds no anger at the United States. She feels no anger at the government of Vietnam. She feels no anger at the man who dropped the napalm on her."

How could she forgive those who were responsible for causing her so much pain, for scarring her for life? Kim had become a Christian. She understood forgiveness--how to give it and how to receive it (Col 3:13-note). She had been forgiven by Jesus for her own sin, and she was allowing the cycle of forgiveness to continue. How about us? — Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Jesus came our debt to pay,
Saved our soul in grace one day;
So in love we all should live,
Ready always to forgive. --Bosch

**When it seems you can't forgive,
remember how much you've been forgiven.**

Are You Good At Forgiving? - Is it possible to measure a Christian's spiritual maturity? Certainly we cannot judge it by the length or even the content of one's prayers. Too much public praying is done for its effect on the "listeners" instead of the "Listener." (Amen!) Even the generosity of one's giving is not an infallible test of spirituality, for it too may be for personal recognition or easing of a guilty conscience.

**Perhaps the surest test
is the ability to forgive.**

Is it hard to forgive a person who has offended us? When we look to Jesus as our example, how are we doing? The more we become like Him, the easier it will be to forgive others. When we think of how much He has forgiven us, we should be willing in turn to forgive others as God in Christ has forgiven us (Ephesians 4:32-[note](#)).

British pastor and evangelist John Wesley (1703-1791) was traveling with General James Oglethorpe, who was angry with one of his subordinates. The man came to the general and humbly asked for forgiveness, but he was gruffly told,

"I never forgive!"

Wesley looked the general in the eye and said,

"Then I hope, sir, that you never sin."

Would you want God to forgive you in the same way you forgive others? Think about it. —M. R. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

I found a little remedy
To ease the life we live
And make each day a happier one:
It is the word "forgive"
—Anon.

**When it seems you can't forgive,
remember how much you've been forgiven.**

Illustration - The Forgiveness Flower - A girl was asked what forgiveness is. She gave the following beautiful answer: "It is the odor the flowers give off when they are trampled upon." For the merciful Christian (Jas 2:13, Mt 5:7-note), this odor reaches far, far away, even up to the judgment seat of Christ (2Cor 5:10) so that the Christian need not shrink back when he gets there. One day when Stan Mooneyham was walking along a trail in East Africa with some friends, he became aware of a delightful odor that filled the air. He looked up in the trees and around at the bushes in an effort to discover where it was coming from. Then his friends told him to look down at the small blue

flower growing along the path. Each time they crushed the tiny blossoms under their feet, more of its sweet perfume was released into the air. Then his friends said, "We call it the forgiveness flower." This forgiveness flower does not wait until we ask forgiveness for crushing it. It does not release its fragrance in measured doses or hold us to a reciprocal arrangement. It does not ask for an apology; it merely lives up to its name and forgives-freely, fully, richly. What a touching example of outrageous forgiveness!

Forgiveness and the Lord's Prayer

Ray Pritchard (Mt 6:12-note) - When we pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," we are asking God to forgive our sins according to the same standard we have used in forgiving the sins of others. There are 11 words in the text, but only one of them is important for our purposes. It's the little word "**as**." Everything hangs on the meaning of that word. "**As**" is the conjunction that joins the first half of the petition with the second half. When Jesus says "**as**," he is setting up a comparison between the way we forgive and the way God forgives us (See discussion of importance of **terms of comparison**). **This text says that we set the standard and then God follows the standard.** We establish the pattern and then God follows that pattern in the way he deals with us. When you pray this prayer you are really saying, "O God, deal with me as I deal with other people. Deal with me as I have dealt with others." We are virtually saying, "O God, I've got a neighbor and I did some favors for my neighbor and my neighbor is ungrateful to me for all I have done. I am angry with my neighbor and I will not forgive him for his ingratitude. Now deal with me as I have dealt with my neighbor." It's as if we're praying, "O God, that man hurt me. I am so angry I can't wait to get even. Deal with me as I have dealt with him." We set the standard and God follows our lead.

Unless you forgive you will not be forgiven. To refuse to forgive someone else and then to ask God for forgiveness is a kind of spiritual schizophrenia. You are asking God to give you what you are unwilling to give to someone else. The fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer tells us you cannot have it both ways. Do you want to be forgiven? You must forgive others.

A Serious Word to the Unforgiving

But does the Bible really teach that God's forgiveness of us is somehow linked to our forgiveness of others? Yes, indeed it does. Let's go back to the words of Jesus. The fifth petition is in verse 12. Now drop down two verses. The Lord's Prayer is over but Jesus is still speaking.

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins (Mt 6:14-15).

I call one crucial fact to your attention: Jesus has just given us the Lord's Prayer and the only part that he singles out for additional commentary is the fifth petition. All the others he leaves alone. I believe he offered further commentary because he knew that we would feel uncomfortable with this part of the Lord's Prayer. He knew that we would try to wiggle out from under it. That is why in verses 14-15 he spells it out so clearly that no one can doubt it.

An "Unforgiven" Christian

As strange as it may sound, there is such a thing as an "unforgiven" Christian. This is not a statement about ultimate destinies. To be "unforgiven" in this sense means that the channel of God's grace is blocked from the human side. In particular, it means that you have chosen to hang on to your bitterness and to forfeit your daily walk with the Lord. You would rather be angry than joyful. You have chosen resentment over peace. Your grudges have become more important to you than the daily blessing of God. You would rather live with the "hidden torturers" than experience the freedom of forgiveness (Mt 18:34, 35).

If you are a Christian—a genuine believer in Jesus Christ—unless you forgive you will not be forgiven. Why? Because God has already forgiven your sins 100% by the blood of Jesus Christ (Eph 1:7, Col 1:14, Mt 26:28 = one of the foundational truths of the New Covenant). How dare you, then, be unforgiving to someone who hurt you? That's really the issue. How dare you be unforgiving after what Jesus Christ did for you on the cross? (Meditate on Galatians 6:14 - learn to boast in the Cross if you are not already doing so.)

What happens when we refuse to forgive? Here are ten consequences of an unforgiving spirit. (I compiled this list using material from R. T. Kendall, Waylon Moore, and Calvary missionary Bob Leland.)

1. Our fellowship with the Father is blocked.

2. The Holy Spirit is grieved. (cp Eph 4:30, 31, 32)
3. Your prayers will not be answered. (Ps 66:18) (Ed: "Regard" means to look with favor upon or even conveys the sense of "to plan" - cf "make provision" in Ro 13:14)
4. God leaves you alone to face the problems of life in your own power. (Mt 18:34, 35)
5. The devil gains a foothold through your bitterness. (Ep 4:29)
6. You force God to become your enemy.
7. You lose the blessing of God on your life.
8. You waste time nursing a wounded spirit.
9. You become enslaved to the people you hate. (The opposite of obeying - Jn 8:31, 32)
10. You become like the people you refuse to forgive.

Our real problem at this point is not theological. Our real problem is personal. We don't see ourselves as very great sinners; therefore, we do not appreciate how greatly God has forgiven us (Ed: Think Ps 103:12, Mic 7:18, 19, Isa 38:17, 43:25). But when your own sins seem small, the sins of others against you will seem big indeed. (cp Mt 7:3, 4)

The reverse is also true. The greater you see the depth of your sin before God, the less the sins of other people against you will bother you (Ed: And the greater you see the Cross, Gal 6:14, the greater less the sin of others will seem in comparison to my sin which cost God's Son's life on the Cross!). If you think you're not much of a sinner, then the offenses of other people are going to appear in your eyes as big.

Don't talk about repentance unless you are willing to forgive your brothers and sisters. Unless you are willing to forgive, your repentance is just so much hot air and empty talk. True repentance always starts with a change of mind that leads to a change of heart that leads to a change (in this case) in the way we view those who have sinned against us.

How do we know when we have truly forgiven?

What does forgiveness look like?

The answer will vary depending on the person involved and what they did to you. Here are a few helpful guidelines (taken partly from Kendall and also from a list by the Puritan author Thomas Watson, as supplied by Waylon Moore):

We know we've forgiven them when we...

1. Face what they did and forgive them anyway
2. Don't keep bringing it up to them.
3. Don't talk about it to others.
4. Show mercy instead of judgment. (Mt 5:7, Jas 2:13)
5. Refuse to speak evil of others.
6. Choose not to dwell on it.
7. Pray for them. (Mt 5:44)
8. Ask God to bless them. (Ro 12:14)
9. Do not rejoice at their calamities. (1 Cor 13:5 -- "does not take into account a wrong suffered")
10. Help them when you can.

Needed: A Serious Moral Inventory

Jesus is telling us that there is a vital link between the way you treat other people and the way God in heaven is going to treat you. Let's face it. We don't like that. On one level we tend to think it would be good if we could hate someone for what they did to us and still have the blessings of God, still be filled with the Spirit, still walk in joy every day, still radiate the love of Jesus, and still have our prayers answered. We'd much prefer if we could just have our relationship with God insulated and encapsulated so we could treat other people any way we like. Jesus says, "No deal. You can't have it that way." Unless you forgive you will not be forgiven. This is a hard word, isn't it? But it is a

hard word of grace. Many of us desperately need to take a searching moral inventory and ask ourselves some serious questions:

- Am I up to date on my forgiving?
- Am I holding a grudge against anyone?
- Do I harbor any bitterness against any person?
- Am I talking too much about what others have done to me?
- Have I forgiven those closest to me who have hurt me so deeply?
- Someone says, “But I can’t forgive.”
- No, don’t ever say that. The word “can’t” is a cop-out.
- The issue is deeper than that. You won’t forgive.

Don’t make excuses and don’t play games. If you are a true Christian, a genuine believer in Jesus Christ, if your sins have been washed away, then you can forgive. What God has done for you, you can do for others. There may be some people who won’t forgive. As long as you won’t forgive you’re better off if you never pray the Lord’s Prayer because unless you forgive you will not be forgiven.

And in all of this we have the example of our Lord Jesus Christ who when he was crucified—the innocent for the guilty—the just for the unjust—the righteous for the unrighteous—Jesus, who was murdered at the hands of wicked men, as he hung on the cross cried out, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” (Lk 23:34)

A Place To Begin

Let’s wrap up this sermon with three simple statements of application.

1. You are never closer to the grace of Jesus Christ than when you confess your sins to him.

Are you laboring under a burden of guilt because of foolish things you have said or done? A sense of your own sin is a sign of God’s grace at work in your heart. When you cry out, “God be merciful to me, a sinner,” you will find that the Father will not turn you away.

2. You are never more like Jesus than when you forgive those who have sinned against you.

Do you want to be like Jesus? Become a great forgiver. Jesus was a forgiving Man. He came to create a race of forgiving men and women.

3. You will never fully enter into your freedom in Christ until you learn the freedom of forgiveness.

The two freedoms go together. As long as you hold on to your resentments, you are still chained to the past. You only hurt yourself. By refusing to forgive, you block off the channel of God’s blessing in your life (cp Jas 4:6, Eph 4:30). Although there is freedom in Christ, the unforgiving Christian knows nothing about it. He is still in bondage to the remembered hurts from the past.

Until those chains are broken by a decisive act of forgiveness, he will remain a slave to the past.

I have said several times that this is a hard word and indeed it is. But it is also a cleansing word that cuts through all our flimsy excuses and leads us to a fountain of grace where we can be healed, made whole, and restored to a right relationship with our Creator. Our God freely forgave us (Eph 4:32, Col 3:13) while we were his enemies. Can we not do for others what he has done for us?

The word of the Lord remains. Unless you forgive you will not be forgiven.

Father in heaven, we thank you for the cleansing Word of God that cuts through all of our flimsy excuses. We praise you because that same Word of God is also able to make us whole and right in your eyes. O God, may we not fight against your work in us. Help us to become great forgivers that we ourselves might be forgiven, cleansed, and strengthened to walk closely with you this week. We ask it in the name of Jesus who made our forgiveness possible, Amen. ([Forgiveness and the Lord’s Prayer - Keep Believing Ministries](#))

Related Resources
Forgive/Forgiveness

- Exposition of "Forgiveness" in Ephesians 4:32
- Exposition of "Forgiveness" in Colossians 3:13
- Exposition of "Forgiveness" in Matthew 6:12 and Matthew 6:14-15.
- Multiple illustrations and quotes related to forgiveness/unforgiveness
- Study the main NT words for forgive/forgiveness:
- Forgiveness ([859](#)) aphesis
- Forgive (send away from, cancel the debt, release, let go) ([863](#)) aphiemai
- Forgive (grant, freely give, bestow) ([5483](#)) charizomai
- Excellent 5 Part Sermon Series on Forgiveness by Dr Ray Pritchard:
- [1\) Forgiveness Healing the Hurt We Never Deserved](#)
- [2\) Forgiveness and the Lord's Prayer](#)
- [3\) Judge Not!](#)
- [4\) Is Total Forgiveness Realistic](#)
- [5\) The Final Step-Blessing Your Enemies](#)
- [Forgiveness of Injuries \(Mt 18:21-22\) by John Angell James](#)
- [Forgiveness of Sins by Henry Law - 17 Chapter Treatise!](#)
- [Father, Forgive Them by Dr. Ray Pritchard](#)
- [Forgiving the Unforgivable by Dr. Ray Pritchard](#)
- [Forgiving the Unforgivable article by Dr. Ray Pritchard](#)