

One Another

Bearing and Forgiving One Another

Colossians 3:12-13

August 30, 2026

Introduction

This is the fourth week in our series on what it means for the church to be a people who belong to one another rather than a crowd who merely attend together. **We have looked at loving one another as Christ has loved us and at speaking truthfully as members of one body.**

Today we come to a text that exposes whether or not those first two truths have actually taken root in us, **because love and truth eventually collide with offense.** Colossians 3:12-13 tells us what happens next. Paul calls it bearing with one another and forgiving one another. **Loving one another and living honestly with one another mandates bearing with one another and forgiving one another.**

Body

(SLIDE) Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another.

We're going to study this passage backwards today. We'll start with the imperative at the end and work our way back to the indicative at the beginning.

Bearing and Forgiving

So, look at v. 13 **(SLIDE)**

Bearing

... bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another.

So let's talk a little bit about BEARING and FORGIVING. The word BEARING here is usually used in the negative (both in biblically and in our culture). Often when I complained as a child to my mother about having to sit through something I didn't like (like church, ironically), she would say, "You're just going to have to grin and bear it." Most of the time the Bible uses this word, it's using it in that way.

But not here. Paul uses it POSITIVELY, something that we should aspire to be able to do as part of our maturing Christian faith. TOLERATING ... ENDURING ... LONGSUFFERING through something unpleasant in another Christian in your church ... THAT is holy behavior. That is a mark of Christian maturity.

Being a part of a church and not expecting to have to "grin and bear it" is like walking into a hospital and not expecting to treat someone. There are many opportunities to BEAR in the Christian life and in the local church.

- **The loud off-key singer right behind you in worship**
- **The life group member with weird prayer requests**
- **The spittle coming out of the preacher's mouth**
- **Absorbing a friend's season of depression and anxiety**
- **Trying to sing worship songs that are new or not your taste**

We have to bear with people and things a lot as Christians, and doing so is a mark of Christian maturity. We have to actively and consistently choose to stay in relationship with other sinners and see the Spirit's work happen in them. That's bearing.

In the same way that bearing weight over and over again results in the physical body you desire, bearing with other people results in the kind of church body that the Lord desires.

Forgiving

But not just bearing. Also forgiving. Look again at v. 13.

... bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another.

The Greek word for **forgiveness** is **charizomai**. It's the same root word for **grace** (*charis*). This helps us better understand exactly what forgiveness is. Forgiveness is a grace-gift. When we forgive someone, we are gifting them with grace. They have wronged us, and we give them a present of grace. So it's not just deciding to let something go ("letting bygones be bygones"), but it is actively giving a gift of grace to someone. **(SLIDE) It's saying to the person who committed an offense against us:**

- **I will not punish you for what you did to me**
- **I will not damage your reputation with others for what you did to me**
- **I will not dwell on what you did to me**

That's forgiveness. That's the grace gift.

And while forgiveness always requires at least 2 people, in our culture we usually put the burden for seeking forgiveness on the person who sinned (the offending party). That's perfectly fine, but notice what Paul does here at the end of v. 13. He puts the responsibility on the person who would give the forgiveness ... the one who "has a grievance against another." The offended party is the one who moves first. This reminded me of something Tim Keller wrote in his wonderful book forgiveness. He said that forgiveness is often granted before it's felt (more about our feelings later).

So, bearing and forgiving define relationships in the local church. Love and truth relationships (our messages from the last two weeks) usually collide with an offense that tests the fidelity of that love and truth. And when that happens, we have to bear and forgive.

How to Bear and Forgive

But how? We hear the command, but how do we do it? **(SLIDE)**. Paul tells us in the second half of v. 12. Look at it with me.

... put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience ...

If we're going to bear and forgive, we have to put on the right uniform. We have to put on these virtues. These virtues are absolutely necessary or critical for bearing and forgiving in the church. Each one of them contributes to the command to bear and forgive **(SLIDE)**.

- **Compassion moves you to see the person who hurt you as a broken person who needs Jesus, not just a perpetrator.**
- **Kindness pushes you to do something positive on that person's behalf.**

- **Humility keeps you as moral equals, crushing your self-righteousness.**
- **Gentleness restrains you from weaponizing truth or getting even.**
- **Patience empowers you to endure the process of rebuilding trust. It's what you need to have the feeling of forgiveness after you've granted forgiveness.**

A lack of bearing and forgiving is likely due to a deficiency in 1 or more of these virtues. If we can identify the reasons why we don't want to bear or forgive, that will expose which virtue we need to ask God for so that we can bear and forgive.

Why We Bear and Forgive

But why bother? Bearing and forgiving is hard. Why bother?

Typically, we forgive for 1 or 2 reasons. There are more than these, but these are the big ones. **(SLIDES as I say them).**

- **To feel better.** Forgiveness does help us feel better. It lowers our stress and promotes healing in general. But if feeling better is your first or primary driver, what are you going to do when **revenge** would feel better?
- **To keep peace.** This is when we forgive or let things go so everyone can get along. This also is a worthy cause, but this fails as a reason to forgive when the offender becomes cruel or shows no remorse (they don't want peace).

These and more are all the world has as reasons for bearing and forgiving, and all of them fall short. We need a deeper, more powerful motive, which Paul gives us in v. 12. Look at it with me. **(SLIDE)**

Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved ...

See, the reason we put on these virtues to bear and forgive is because of who we are. It's rooted in our identity.

- The fact that we are chosen humbles us at a moment where we are tempted to swell with pride and self-righteousness. Self-righteousness says "I'm offended!" Humility rooted in chosenness says "I'm forgiving you."
- The fact that we are holy reminds us that we are set apart to reflect Jesus' character to a broken world.
- The fact that we are loved securely by God gives us the emotional fullness we need to absorb offenses without demanding payback. "Even if this person hasn't acted in love toward me, God did act in love toward me in Christ, so I can act in love toward them."

Conclusion/Application

(SLIDE) Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another.

First, let me invite you into the relationship with God that can make you this kind of person. Christianity's roots are bearing and forgiving.

1 Peter 2:24 states it directly: ***"He himself BORE our sins in his body on the tree; so that, having died to sins, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed"***

Second, let me invite those in Christ to the table. The table ... taking communion together ... is a physical reminder of this passage. We

come to it to remember what He did for us and who we are as His followers. We are CHOSEN. We are MADE HOLY. We are LOVED. We are not only remember what He did, but remember who we are as a result. Let communion today be a catalyst for bearing and forgiving, just as Christ bore and forgave you.