



JANUARY 20, 2024 SATURDAY - DAY 13

PRAY THAT WE WOULD BEAR WITH ONE ANOTHER

EPHESIANS 4:2; COLOSSIANS 3:13

We have already seen earlier in Galatians that we are to “bear one another’s burdens.” This “one another” sounds alike but is different. The earlier word means to assist another with a burden, to carry or lift it. Here “bear” means to be tolerant towards other believers to endure patiently their idiosyncrasies and weaknesses to have a forgiving spirit toward others who wrong us.

A FORBEARING SPIRIT

Becoming a Christian doesn’t automatically make us lovable. The process of being conformed to Christ’s image is just beginning and will take a lifetime of grace. Consequently, there are many in the body of Christ, who fit one writer’s description of “irregular people,” who tend to rub us the wrong way. With these saints in mind, sometimes we are tempted to sing, “I’m SURPRISED you’re a part of family of God.” Someone has said, “Where there is light, there will be bugs!” The gospel attracts the most wounded and needy of us. That is why God tells us to “bear with one another.”

When we refuse to retaliate against believers who have wronged us, when we wait patiently for God to mature immature saints, when we smile and continue to serve the least lovable among us, **we are reflecting the very character of our gracious God.** How can this forbearing spirit be expressed towards those in our lives who are hard to bear?

The context itself gives us the key.

- We are to relate to others with “all lowliness.” Literally, this is a compound word meaning low mindedness, as opposed to high mindedness. When Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, began by describing the characteristics of a kingdom disciple, the first note he sounded was “poor in spirit.” The clearest sign of a believer is a humble spirit that says, “Nothing in my hands I bring; Simply to the cross I cling.” When you realize your own spiritual bankruptcy, it is easier to bear with others.

- We are also to relate to other with “gentleness.” The King James Version uses the word “meekness.” The trouble is, in our society, meekness is associated with weakness. Our Lord described himself as “meek and lowly in heart.” There was absolutely nothing weak about our Savior. What the word implies is a lack of contentiousness, an unwillingness to fight and struggle with God or with others. Why is it that conservative Christians are so noted for their red faced, acrimonious, looking for a fight attitude?

- We are to relate to others with “long suffering,” or patience. This word literally means, “having a long fuse, slow to blow up.” When God revealed his glorious name and character to Moses on the mount, He included not only mercy and grace, but also long suffering. It is likewise a part of the fruit of the spirit. In short, one cannot reflect the image of God without patience. No one of us is perfect. We must be patient with each other. We can’t expect more from others than we expect from ourselves. Paul was thankful for the patience the Lord had with him. (1 Tim. 1:15 - 17).

A FORGIVING SPIRIT

Bearing with one another and having a forgiving spirit are synonymous concepts. Colossians 3:13 puts the two together “bearing with one another, and forgiving one another.” Some Christians carry grudges for years. How out of character for a follower of Jesus Christ, who canceled our own debt of sin. Failure to forgive comes in only one flavor bitter. One day Peter came to Jesus to ask how many times he should forgive his brother? Seven times? Jesus surprised him with seventy times seven.

Not 490, but unlimited forgiveness (Matt. 18:21 - 22). Then Jesus told a parable to show what he meant (Matt. 18:23 - 35). Author George Herbert once put it this way: “He who cannot forgive another breaks the bridge over which he must pass himself.”



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Immediately after Paul instructed the Ephesian believers to bear with one another, he said, "endeavoring [making every effort] to keep the unity of the spirit" (Eph. 4:3). Forbearance does not come naturally; It is not easy. It is what sets genuine believers apart from the rest of humanity because only the power of the spirit can enable us to bear with one another.

To bear with each other takes deliberate act of the will. It doesn't happen naturally. One chooses to be bitter and unforgiving, and another chooses to be forgiving. Likewise, one must endeavor, make every effort, to keep unity in the body.

Wedgwood Baptist Church is not filled with what the world would call the "movers and shakers" of the city. At present we have no doctors, no politicians. What we do seem to have is a number of blind people, handicapped folks, and special needs children. One Sunday, a dear woman was having one of her "episodes" where she just runs until she falls. She got up in the middle of the service and ran out. A staff member went running after her and chased her across the baptistery twice before catching and restraining her. Throughout it all, the Pastor kept preaching. At times our flesh has cried out, "Oh, God, why don't you send us some of the "Beautiful People"? God continually speaks to our spirit, saying the real test of Wedgwood is how we treat "the least of these" with forbearance, love, and acceptance.

Pray that we would bear with one another.

PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER

1. As you pray, be thankful to God for all the old sins already forgiven in you, and thereby develop a grateful, forbearing spirit.
2. Ask God to let you see all of your fellow believers with godly eyes hurting, wounded, broken, in need of grace believers.
3. Ask God to reveal to you any smoldering resentment of past hurts and wrongs and to heal you of the poison left in your soul.
4. Thank God for the people in your life who have been patiently forbearing as you have gone through the process of becoming more like Christ.

Kindness in our churches not only sympathizes with the needy and hurting, but also it seeks to relieve the hurt and meet the need.

**...With all lowliness and gentleness,
With long suffering,
Bearing with one another in love...
Eph. 4:2**