

Christian Character - Forbearance

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[0 : 0 0] We're going to talk about, so we've been in a kind of an evening series, if you will, looking at different aspects of Christian character, mostly from the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians, as well as well.

So I will, if you start in Galatians chapter 5, that's 1-1-7-2, 1-1-7-2 in the church Bibles. So we've had a variety of these. We had love and joy. We had self-control. I did that one. Seth, which one did you do recently?

Gentleness. So we've had some really positive, fun things. Tonight we're going to talk about forbearance. So if that, you know, elicits shouts of praise because you came here ready to speak about forbearance, that's one of your favorite subjects.

Yes, you'll be by yourself. No. But I think it is interesting. I kind of went into thinking about it, studying it without a whole lot of expectation, sort of hadn't given it a ton of thought in a specific way.

But I think it was, it's interesting. And so I hope it'd be helpful for all of us to look at. So let's just look at that verse in Galatians 5, 22, when it talks about the fruit of the Spirit.

[1 : 4 6] It says, Right, so we have the fruit of the Spirit. And you've got love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, control.

Against such things there is no law. Right? I think we can easily get there with goodness, love, joy, peace. Those are easy ones to get on board with.

Self-control we talked about is maybe like, okay, that one's a little bit out there. And then forbearance is thrown in there. Sometimes that's translated as patience. And I'm going to tell you why that's maybe leave something to be desired.

But let me ask you, the word forbearance, what does that even mean? Right? I'm curious to hear what you think, without having like, done any study or thought about it very much before you walked in here this evening.

What is forbearance? What does that mean? Patience. Patience. I gave you the clue there. Yeah, patience is part of it, for sure.

[3 : 2 3] To keep going. I like that. Endurance, in some ways, yeah. What's that? Tolerance. Interesting. It feels a little different than endurance, but maybe related.

Anything else comes to mind? Ability to wait. Ability to wait. Yeah, that's good. So yeah, patience, ability to wait.

Interesting. Anything else before I carry on? So, I think, when you think of forbearance, the connotation that comes is sort of a refraining from the enforcement of a punishment.

Right? So, patient, enduring in the sense that the thing that should be done is being held. Right? So, as we looked at God and Jonah, right, there was something that the Ninevites and even Jonah were maybe deserved that's been held off for a bit.

Right? So, forbearance is patience, but it's a specific kind of patience, because it's kind of patience under provocation. Right?

- [4 : 40] So, patience, you can wait for something. You can wait even for others to mature and grace and find their way.
- Right? You can be patient there. But forbearance is being patient when their immaturity is directed at you. Right? And so, we can be patient when someone maybe has a different opinion than us.
- And we can say, okay, that's not what I think. But you know what? I can be patient. I can endure that for a bit. But when we have to forbear when that means that they are attacking or demeaning us in some way.
- Right? Or for our opinion. Or for origin. So, there's like a slight nuance in there. Because forbearance is almost like I'm bearing something that's being directed at me.
- I'm holding maybe what would be the right response in order to have grace in that moment. Right? And so, you can see that in God because the sinfulness is against him.
- [5 : 51] Right? And so, he's holding back what would be the just return for that. So, we're going to look at Romans to flesh this out a little bit.
- So, if you want to flip there, we'll go. Actually, hold on. Before you do that, pause. I want to read from Ephesians 2. Sorry, Ephesians 2.
- Because it talks about forbearance there as well. Sorry, Ephesians 4. Ephesians 4. Yeah.
- He says, Paul says, As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling that you have received. Be completely humble and gentle. Be patient.
- Bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. Right? So, you've got that bearing with one another in love.
- [6 : 53] That's that forbearance. Right? So, you've got patience, but then you've got sort of a nuanced difference. Right? He said patience and bear with one another in love. And so, there's a difference there.
- And so, now, we can flip to Romans. Let's go back. Romans, Romans, Romans. Romans. It's Romans 2, which is why I was telling you the wrong thing before.
- Romans 2. This is 1, 1, 2, 9, if you haven't found it. And I'll start in verse 2. It says, Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things, this was being condemned, is based on truth.
- So, when you, a human being, pass judgment on them, yet do the same things, do you think that you will escape God's judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance, and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?
- Right? So, God's kindness, God's forbearance, God's patience with us is intended to lead us to repentance.
- [8 : 13] Right? Like, the reason we read Jonah earlier was to help us kind of frame this in our mind, that the Ninevites, it said that they were doing all sorts of wickedness.
- Right? They had been running from God and not giving him glory, not worshiping him, such that God is going to destroy them.
- Right? That's the punishment that's coming. His just punishment for their activity is their destruction. But in his patience, in his kindness, in his forbearance, he reaches out to them.
- He calls Jonah, he says, Jonah, go to the Ninevites, tell them that this is coming, so that they might repent. Right? And so, this is God forbearing, pausing what could be done, what maybe is rightly going to be done, in order for them to have time to repent.

And then, so, the funny thing is, like Jonah, we rarely want to work this way. Right? So, when we think about when something's been done to us, something wrong has been done to us, we rarely are saying, let me pause, let me wait until they have a chance to maybe repent and ask for forgiveness of that sin that they have just come.

[9 : 34] Right? No, we want justice, and we want it immediately. We want it because our flesh desires that. Right? And we might even be right in the sense that they have done us wrong, and we desire there to be retribution of some sort.

Right? But what the fruit of the Spirit, allowing us to have this forbearance, is saying, you know what, we don't pursue that, particularly in the context of in the church.

And so, we're looking at it, and what Paul is calling us to, is to say, be like God, and let those things be patient, and let something, let their wrong, let them have time to repent of their wrong.

Right? Right? So, it's really interesting. As you keep reading in Romans, if you flip over to chapter 3, 3 verse 25, it says, God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement through the shedding of his blood to be received by faith.

He did this to demonstrate his righteousness because in his forbearance, he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished. He did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

[10 : 58] Right? Right? So, God's patience with us allows Christ to come in and be just and the justifier.

Right? God can be patient with us while remaining just in his self because he ultimately deals with our sin. He doesn't just let it go. He deals with it, but he deals with it on the cross.

Right? And God is patient with the sin of those who hurt us while he remains just because he ultimately deals with their sin on the cross.

You see what's happening? He allows time for repentance in us and in those who hurt us. Right? And so, we can be patient with those who hurt us because we know that God is just and we know that their sin will be dealt with or has been dealt with on the cross.

And so, just as he has ours. Right? And so, we can look to the cross and know that, you know what? That person's sin, that thing that has hurt me, has been dealt with.

[12 : 07] Right? Whether they are in that place or not, that's between them and God. But now, I can forbear with my brother in Christ because I know that their sin has been dealt with.

And there will be times when I need it. And there have been times when I've needed it. And God has dealt with my sin on the cross. And I've been forgiven. And so, he's been patient with me.

So, I can be patient now with my brother or my sister. Right? And it's just like the other fruits of the spirit. We don't...

The ability to forbear is a fruit. It's a gift of the spirit. It's not something that we learn how to be. It's not something that we work hard at, necessarily.

It's something that God's grace gives us. Right? The spirit in our lives produces this. Because now, we're thinking differently about the world.

[13 : 05] We're looking at the things that happen in life, not from our lens of saying, I'm the most important. And therefore, a sin against me needs punishment. We're looking at it from the perspective of, all sin needs punishment.

And God has given the punishment. And he's provided that on his own son on the cross. And now, we can look and live in the grace that he gives.

Right? Forbearance is not a fruit of our goodness. Right? Nor is it a result of our exceptional spirituality. Right? It's a gift that God gives in the spirit.

In the same way he gives us love. In the same way he gives us joy. In the same way he gives us self-control. Right? These things, like, we don't determine in our lives to be joyful.

We can try. But it's the spirit who moves in that. So, anyway. This is the context.

[14 : 09] When we go back to, when we think about the Ephesians passage. Right? Where he's talking about forbearance there. The context of that is unity and maturity in the body of Christ.

Right? So, when we see forbearance, it's talking about between Christians. Between brothers and sisters who have already looked and said, we trust God.

I'm committing to that. And so, when we're looking at each other in this room. And we're saying, like, now, like, you've said or done something to me that hurt my feelings.

Or made me feel like lesser than. Or I've done something like that to you. I've spoken harshly. Or, you know, whatever else it is.

The forbearance is looking at that and saying, I don't need to jump into this. Right? I don't need to get my right, just reward of feeling like, you know, you have now been belittled or come to your sin.

[15 : 19] Right? The implication is that we can now interact with one another. It's like, you know, we can have patience with one another and we have different opinions. We can also forbear with one another when something has gone sideways.

Right? And that's an important aspect of unity that Paul and others bring us to. Right? In order to make unity amongst the church family, based on Ephesians 4, verse 2, it says, be completely humble.

Right? We have to show humility because our thoughts, ideas, hopes are not necessarily everyone else's thoughts, ideas, and hopes. Right? Even if we have the same goal in mind.

Right? We want to see Jesus proclaimed from here. We might end up with different opinions and ideas about how that might be done. Right? And so we have to be humble enough to allow for different ideas and different things to come out.

Right? It's not our way of doing things. Right? We have to be gentle. Right? We have to show gentleness in order to maintain unity. Right?

[16 : 30] The way to respond to others either builds relationships or it tears them apart. Right? And so as we are going about these different things, as we're engaged in the life of the church, as we work together as a body.

Right? We have to show gentleness to one another in order to maintain that unity. We have to be patient. Right? And this is the kind of patience that others will do things that we might disagree with or we might think is not the best way.

Or we might think we have a better idea. And yet we need to be patient with those things and say, you know what? Like, we'll see how this goes. Right?

Or maybe it's fine. I don't know yet. You know, maybe it's just their idea versus my idea. Right? There's a variety, a multitude of things that come to that, that we can be patient with one another as we see these things play ourselves out.

Right? But then it also says we'll have to forbear because sometimes the other person won't be patient or sometimes we won't be patient and we'll step into something and say something that's hurtful or say something that's demeaning and it'll cause problems.

[17 : 41] Right? And so when that happens to us, our call is to forbear. Right? Our call is to look at that person in love and thank God for the grace that he has on their life and the grace that he's shown in my life and allow ourselves to move forward.

Right? There might be a moment where we, you know, have a conversation about that. But that's sort of separate because you can have that in a, in a, in a way that's helpful if you've forbear through.

I don't know if that's the right way to make it. But if we've forbear such that the relationship is intact and now I can, I can have a conversation about why that was hurtful or whatever and we can, we can seek reconciliation.

But if you come at it, you know, looking for your just retribution, you're, you're going to hurt that relationship. You see? And so the unity amongst the church requires us to look at one another and say, you hurt me and I'm not going to ask for, like, I want reconciliation, but I'm not going to ask for retribution.

I don't need my, there's a word that I'm missing that I can't think of, but you get what I'm saying. Right? Like, I'm not making no sense. Right? And so here's the interesting thing about forbearance, I think, that we see in the, in the text when particularly, you know, obviously forbearance is one of these things that it's God's example.

[19 : 15] Right? None of us wake up wanting to just let people get away with stuff that hurts us. Right? Like, that's not, that's not how we would just go about things. Right? So this is clearly something that is God calling us to something that's outside of ourselves.

Right? And it's because it's in his character to be patient and slow to anger with us. Right? And so when we see it, the reality is God determined to be patient and forbear with us.

Right? Before he had to. He was, he had determined to do it and then he was. Right? And so what, what comes from that is that we end up bearing with one another in love is not a feeling or an attitude that just will come up inside of us.

Right? There's a, there's a, there's a, there's a choice, a commitment that as we are walking with the Lord and we, we're reading these texts from Ephesians and we're, we're considering what God has for us.

It's, it's a, he says, bear with one another in love. And so the, the assumption is that you're reading that not in a moment where someone has already offended you.

[20 : 33] Right? You're, you're probably just reading this. Maybe, maybe he has, but like the point is you're reading it at a time where you can say, yeah, no, that's, that's actually the thing that I should do. I've seen God move and he's bared with me in love in a way that I haven't.

And so I can, I can make that decision now as part of, as, as looking to Christ. And I can say, my, my role, my job is to commit and choose well ahead of time to bear with one another.

Right? To look at my brothers and sisters in Christ and say, you know what, there's going to be a moment when, when I'm hurt here. When, when something goes a little bit sideways. But Paul and Jesus and God are calling us to say, you know what, like, let me slow, slow my role here so that I can bear with this.

Right? You understand that I'm not saying that we should just let people get away with stuff. That's not what I'm, not what I'm, not what the text says. That's not what I'm saying. But like, there's a difference in, for bearing.

So when you look at bearing with one another in love, so you bear with one another, you choose and you commit ahead of time to do that. And in love, right? Love in this case is the attitude and action, not the feeling.

[21 : 48] Right? So we're, we're, we're choosing to be loving in this moment. To look at our brother in Christ, look at our sister in Christ who's, who's potentially done something that has hurt us.

And we're saying, you know what, I'm going to love them anyway. Because Christ has loved me as I hurt him. Right? Like, do we see that? Like, I hope I'm making sense because I'm like, this is an interesting one, right?

So this idea of forbearance, right? Yeah, please do. Yeah. So I was going to, I didn't say at the start, because I was thinking, am I reading, so I'm looking at the word you're thinking.

And the modern weeks, before I'm not, that's where the meaning point is. But it says, so you've got two parts. You've got my problem, which for me I'd say, this is far away.

And the meaning point is anger. So it's like, keep your anger far away. Yeah, that's good. So that's what I would say, this would be the word.

[22 : 58] Good way to imagine it, right? Keep your anger far away, right? And we see that in Christ, right? We see that in God and in the story of Jonah and in the story of each one of our lives. If we've come to faith in him, right?

His anger was not on us, right? When it could have been, right? He's stayed that anger and said, you know what? Like, here's an opportunity to come back.

And that's basically what we're doing. We're looking at one another and we're saying, you know what? I could be angry right now and I could come down harshly back at you and maybe be justified in that. But I'm going to choose not to.

I'm going to keep it far away. And I'm going to trust that the Lord will deal. And I'm going to love you in it. And often that's going to help us get the kind of reconciliation that we want anyway, right?

And there's going to be an opportunity. But if we come down with the harshness, I mean, this is, you know, when you're dealing with kids, you're dealing with a partner, you're dealing with family members, right?

[23 : 56] We're dealing with church members. Like, this is not rocket science. But it's so deep because it's how God has dealt with us, right? And when you think about it in that way, right, like, you see what God has done and you see how he has held off what was rightly directed at me.

And he put it on his own son that all of a sudden, like, the idea of, like, not being just, like, brutal back to someone who's hurt one of us feels like not even that big of a deal, right?

And so that's the whole idea, that we can be, we can forbear with one another. Yeah? Yeah. I was going to ask you, there's an additional aspect in terms of our relationship with other leaders.

Because, I mean, what you're saying is foundation. Yeah. It is. Any other thoughts around questions?

Certainly. I think the context of the passage that I was looking at was really in the body.

[25 : 29] But I would, in a general sense, we should be forbearing and holding our anger regardless. Yeah. It's not like it doesn't apply when they don't believe and you're like, nope, smash them.

No, it's for everyone. It can come off as a, like, that's a heavy thing to try to, like, particularly if you've been hurt, right?

It's like, that's a hard ask. But the implication is that it's not on us to do it, right? Like, we don't have to figure out the strength to hold because we're looking to Christ and we're looking at him and we're thankful.

And, you know, in the same way that we just sang Amazing Grace and we've prayed these prayers of, like, how gracious and merciful God has been to us, that it wells up.

The fruit of the Spirit in us allows us to do that, right? It's not something that we have to practice in the sense, like, we should. But practice isn't going to, like, make you a better forbearer.

[26 : 42] It's looking closer at Jesus, believing in him and being more overwhelmed with what he's done and how he's forbore with my own sin.

That's how you become, that's how this develops as fruit in your life. Okay? Let me pray and then we'll sing another song to end.

Father, we come to you recognizing that we are often like Jonah. Jonah, we know that you're good.

We know that you're kind and forgiving. And when we are called to forgive, we don't want to because we know that you will.

And we want to see those who have hurt us feel the just ramifications of their sin.

[27 : 45] And God, help us to remember how we were before we knew you. Lord, that the times that we have sinned and you have held your hand and you have put your anger far away from us and put it on Jesus.

God, we want to look to you. We want to look at what you've done. We want to trust in your grace and your mercy on us such that that overflows out of us into how we look and engage with those around us.

Lord, we pray that the fruit of the spirit would be at work in our lives. Lord, that you would fill us up and it would push out all the things that were there before. Lord, as Paul says, we want to take off the old self and put on the new self.

Lord, the one that comes from you. So, Lord, I pray for us tonight. I pray for our church here at West Kilburn. I pray that we would forbear. We would bear with one another in love just in the way that you've dealt with us.

And so we ask for your help. We ask for your forgiveness when we've done it wrong. And we ask for your grace to do it next time we pray. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.

[29 : 06]