

All I want for Christmas is: **Peace and Forgiveness**

11.30.25

Finding peace by getting rid of unforgiveness and bitterness.

Scripture

Ephesians 4:25–32 (CSB)

²⁵ Therefore, putting away lying, **speak the truth, each one to his neighbor**, because we are members of one another. ²⁶ **Be angry and do not sin.** Don't let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and don't give the devil an opportunity. ²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal. Instead, he is to do honest work with his own hands, so that he has something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹ No foul language should come from your mouth, but only what is good for building up someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear. ³⁰ **And don't grieve God's Holy Spirit. You were sealed by him for the day of redemption.** ³¹ **Let all bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander be removed from you, along with all malice.** ³² **And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.**

Introduction:

A. Wouldn't it be amazing if God's people experienced God's presence, peace, and anointing this year like never before?

1. What would it look like for you and me to have a greater sense of peace?

a. What about a greater anointing?

b. A greater freedom?

2. These are the sort of things that I long for all of us to have.
3. Even more than that, this is what God wants for us.
4. God wants us to walk in a life marked by His presence and the absence of bitterness, anger, wrath, and malice.

B. A recurring theme in Scripture connects the Peace of God and the Presence of the Holy Spirit with forgiveness.

1. Not just God forgiving me of my sins, but of me forgiving others of their sins against me.
2. I firmly believe that many believers are missing out on the peace of God and the anointing of the Holy Spirit because we are actively engaged in bitterness, envy, strife, and anger towards someone.

C. Part of the process and journey to experiencing the fullness of God's plan and blessings for our lives involves addressing the difficult topic of forgiveness.

1. Forgiveness is a living topic:

A. The longer we live, the more hurt we experience and the more opportunities we have to model forgiveness.

1. Forgiveness is not a theological topic where, once you learn it, you don't have to learn it again.
2. Forgiveness is something I am challenged by every day.
 - a. Just as soon as I think I have it figured out, I am given another opportunity where I must forgive again.
 - b. I often find myself surprised by thoughts I believed I had forgiven, only to have them pop up in my mind again.
 - c. In those moments, I'm faced with the same raw feelings and emotions, reliving parts of the experience each time.

B. Forgiveness challenges us.

1. The disciples demonstrate this challenge in Matthew 18:21-22, where Peter asks if there are limits to our responsibility to forgive someone.

2. Matthew 18:21–22 (CSB)

²¹ Then Peter approached him and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? As many as seven times?” ²² “I tell you, not as many as seven,” Jesus replied, “but seventy times seven.”

3. Scripture is clear:

a. **Jesus expects us to practice forgiveness.**

b. Just as a doctor never masters medicine but is always considered a practitioner, we never master forgiveness but are called to be practitioners.

4. And what is at stake is more than our mental health.

5. Tied to the practice of forgiveness is the presence of God.

D. This week’s message and next week’s are about forgiveness.

1. Because the reality is, almost every one of us here has someone in their life that we need to forgive and struggle doing so.

2. It might be an ex, a parent, an employer, or maybe yourself or God.

3. Forgiveness is an essential teaching and practice of the church.

4. Let us look at a couple of essential passages.

Scripture

Ephesians 4:30–32 (CSB)

³⁰ **And don’t grieve God’s Holy Spirit. You were sealed by him for the day of redemption.** ³¹ **Let all bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander be removed from you, along with all malice.** ³² **And be**

kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.

Colossians 3:12–15 (CSB)

¹² Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, **put on** compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and **forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive.** ¹⁴ Above all, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ, to which you were also called in one body, rule your hearts. And be thankful.

How do we live a life that has more of God's presence and less anger, unforgiveness, and other nastiness?

It begins with recognizing:

2. The Holy Spirit is grieved when we do not forgive.

A. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is directly connected to forgiveness.

1. When God forgives us, He sends His Holy Spirit to live in us.
2. The Holy Spirit then seals our salvation and makes that salvation real.
3. We then become the "temple of the Holy Spirit", where the presence of God lives in us.

B. **Because the Holy Spirit is a person and not an "it", He feels emotion.**

1. That is why it is appropriate for the Apostle Paul to tell us not to "Grieve" the Holy Spirit.
 - a. Inanimate objects don't grieve.
 - b. Only living beings grieve and express sorrow.

2. It is a terrible thought that you and I, by our actions and behaviors, can actually cause the Spirit of God to grieve in us.

C. Paul gave us a glimpse into the mind of God when he said that we are to let go of all bitterness, anger, malice, and shouting at each other.

1. These actions and emotions grieve (cause distress) the Holy Spirit.

2. The Apostle connects all of these behaviors to the bigger issues of hatred and unforgiveness.

a. That means that when I rehearse in my mind the wrongs someone has done to me,

b. When I actively look for opportunities to punish someone for the wrong committed against me,

c. When I rejoice in the downfall of the one who caused me pain, I am no longer acting or behaving Christlike.

d. What I am actually doing is I'm choosing to hang on to anger, bitterness, and unforgiveness and I'm letting go of the Presence of God.

e. And because my actions and inner world are not in alignment with Christ, I distress (grieve) the Spirit of God in me.

3. That is why Paul said to get rid of ALL of these things.

a. It is normal and natural to experience anger and not want to forgive.

b. But we are not called to natural things but supernatural, and to forgiveness is a supernatural act.

D. What is in it for me?

1. We can become so accustomed to the fruit of bitterness that we can't imagine our life without it.

2. But the absence of bitterness and unforgiveness leads to God's peace in our lives.

R.T. Kendall said it like this:

The absence of bitterness allows the Holy Spirit to be Himself in us. This means that I will become like Jesus. When the Spirit is grieved, I am left to myself, and I will struggle with emotions ranging from anger to fear. But when the Holy Spirit is not grieved, He is *at home* with me; He will begin to change me into the person He wants me to be, and I will be able to manifest the gentleness of the Spirit. Relinquishing bitterness is an open invitation for the Holy Spirit to give you His peace, His joy, and the knowledge of His will.¹

3. For all of us, the next step always includes forgiveness.

- a. If we want to be more like Jesus, we practice forgiveness.
- b. If our life is missing out on peace and joy, maybe we need to practice forgiveness.

4. We were not designed to harbor hate towards others.

- a. Our bodies are not designed to be vessels of anger, hatred, and bitterness.
 - 1. Literally, the stress of anger makes us sick or can kill us.
 - 2. Hypertension, sleeplessness, ulcers, all of these physical ailments are reminders we were not created to be a safe harbor for unforgiveness!

¹ R. T. Kendall, [*Total Forgiveness: When Everything in You Wants to Hold a Grudge, Point a Finger, and Remember the Pain—god Wants You to Lay It All aside*](#) (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2010).

- b. We were created to be a vessel for God's love, peace, and presence.
- c. That is only possible with the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- d. But, the Holy Spirit does not live in the same house as bitterness, anger, and unforgiveness.
- e. We must choose between grasping onto the fruit of unforgiveness or the presence and peace of God.

Let me show you this from our passage from Colossians:

Colossians 3:12–15 (CSB)

¹² Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, **put on** compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and **forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive.** ¹⁴ Above all, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ, to which you were also called in one body, rule your hearts. And be thankful.

3. The fruit and ministry of the Holy Spirit are undone by unforgiveness.

A. Paul tells the church at Colossae to put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

- 1. The word "put on" refers to the act of putting on clothes.
- 2. There are two interesting things about putting on clothes:

- a. **First**, putting on clothes is an intentional act.

- 1. We don't accidentally put on clothes.

- a. We may not have put much thought into clothing ourselves today, but we did get up and put clothes on.

b. We went through the act of putting on a shirt, putting on your pants, and putting on underwear (hopefully not in that order).

2. For us to wear, put on, the fruit of the Spirit such as compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, it ain't going to happen by accident.

a. You are going to have to intentionally put on those things.

b. You are going to have to choose to wear patience, and kindness, and compassion.

c. Patience is a choice.

d. Kindness is a choice.

e. Compassion is a choice.

b. **Second**, putting on clothes is a learned behavior that can become second nature.

a. We weren't born knowing how to clothe ourselves, but all of us learned.

b. Part of the growing process, eventually learning to dress ourselves.

1. It may be funny for a 1 or 2 -year old to run around the church with no pants on.

2. But it is illegal for adults to run around with no pants on.

c. The good news is that we can learn to put on the clothes of patience, gentleness, and kindness.

d. All of us should learn to clothe ourselves with the peace of God.

1. Paul made this a command.

2. "Therefore, because you are God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, PUT ON these things."

3. Because of our status and relationship to God, it is not befitting us to live without the covering of the Holy Spirit as demonstrated by compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

B. The opposite of clothed is...naked.

a. Our sinful, naked condition displays everything we don't want to be seen.

b. Our naked condition is full of anger, hatred, bitterness, and unforgiveness.

c. And the only way to cover that up and to neutralize it is through the presence of the Holy Spirit and the intentional putting on of God's clothes for us.

C. Consider this experiment:

1. If the Lord made us t-shirts to wear that showed our heart condition, what would yours say?

a. Angry?

b. Bitter?

c. Broken?

d. 20-year feud with my sister?

e. Refuse to talk to my dad?

f. I can't sleep at night because I hate you so much!

2. How do we change the script?

3. How do we experience the peace and power of God in our lives?

4. We experience God's peace through forgiveness.

Colossians 3:12–15 (CSB)

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A. Just as the Lord forgave you, you also are to forgive.

1. I believe this sentence is the linch-pin of the passage.
2. It is forgiveness that connects the peace of Christ to us.

B. First, God's forgiveness is applied to our lives.

1. At salvation, we experience the canceling of our sin debt.
2. Psalm 103:8–12 (CSB)

⁸ The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love. ⁹ He will not always accuse us or be angry forever. ¹⁰ He has not dealt with us as our sins deserve or repaid us according to our iniquities. ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his faithful love toward those who fear him. ¹² As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

3. God chooses to forgive you and me totally the moment we are saved.

- a. He isn't holding a grudge against us.
- b. He isn't waiting for you to mess up again to remind you of the last time you failed.

c. He is not secretly plotting against you to expose your sin.

d. To quote a recent TV show: If you are waiting for the other shoe to drop, “no one is keeping track of shoes.”²

4. **God’s forgiveness is total and complete in Jesus.**

C. Because God’s forgiveness for us is this complete, this is how God expects us to forgive others.

1. The Apostle Paul is writing to believers.

a. He lays the burden of forgiveness upon those who have received forgiveness.

b. How can we expect non-believers to practice something with which they have never experienced?

c. Paul calls upon the Church, the believers, to model forgiveness to others and bear with one another.

2. As we exercise our forgiveness towards others, we reap, again, the peace and blessings of God that we receive at salvation.

a. We will not know God’s full peace as long as we harbor unforgiveness towards someone.

b. We are called to be examples of Jesus in our world, and the example He set for us is an example of forgiveness, not hate.

3. That is why **when we are unforgiving, merciless, and graceless, we become peace-less.**

5. Do I have the right not to forgive?

A. Some of you have experienced terrible actions committed against you.

² Line from the TV show: The Bear.

1. God isn't asking you to deny that.
2. God isn't minimizing the sinfulness of people's actions against.
3. Forgiveness doesn't require us to go back to that abusive husband, the drug-dealing sister, or the evil boss. (Forgiveness and reconciliation are not the same thing).
4. Yet, **to forgive someone we have to confess that someone has hurt and wronged us.**
5. Without confession of sin there is no forgiveness.

1 John 1:8–9 (CSB)

⁸ If we say, "We have no sin," we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

B. The word "confess" is translated from the Greek word *homologeo*.

1. *Homologeo* is a compound word.
 - a. *Homo* means "the same."
 - b. *Logeo* means "to say or speak."
2. When you put it together, it means **to say the same thing.**
3. **To confess your sin means to say the same thing about your sin that God says about your sin—to agree with God concerning your sin.**

C. Not only must we confess the sins we have committed, but we also confess those things which have been done to us.

1. **When someone has wronged us:**
 - a. As long as I deny that you have sinned against me, I am deceived.
 - b. I am acting like nothing is wrong even though I have suffered some sort of injury.

c. As long as I repress and deny the wrong, I can't forgive because I am lying to myself about what has happened.

d. In other words, I am not saying the same thing God is saying about the situation.

1. God takes sin seriously even when we don't.
2. He isn't overlooking the sin or pain caused you.
3. He takes it seriously, as evidenced by the Cross of Jesus.
4. Denying the sin against doesn't take us off the hook for practicing forgiveness.

2. To receive the peace of God, you must practice the forgiveness of God.

- a. Therefore, do whatever it takes to be honest with yourself before God.
- b. Say, "God I'm angry and I know I'm angry. That person hurt me and it is driving me crazy. I've been holding on to this for too long, making excuses, and enjoying the presence of my anger.
- c. But I can't have the peace of God and hold on to my anger. Change me oh God!

D. Many of us want to forgive and we want peace.

1. If we are honest, we are angry because of what has happened or what was lost.
 - a. We might not think about it every day, but sometimes there is a trigger, and it reminds you of what that person did.
 - b. And when we think about it, all of the old feelings come pouring in.
2. Maybe your pain is recent.

- a. Maybe you are in the midst of a situation where someone is presently committing sin against God and you.
 - b. And inside you find yourself more and more angry, bitter, resentful, and hurt.
3. You've prayed to forgive the person, but you aren't there yet.
- a. Maybe you are afraid that if you forgive the person then they will be off the hook for what they have done.
 - b. But remember that, "Vengeance is mine says the Lord".
 - c. It is not within your authority to bring vengeance but it is within your domain to bring forgiveness.

How can we be sure that there is no bitterness left in our hearts? Bitterness is gone when there is no desire to get even with or punish the offender, when I do or say nothing that would hurt his reputation or future, and when I truly wish him well in all he seeks to do.³

Closing: The Church is designed to be the place where forgiveness is experienced and practiced.

A. Our altar time is focused upon these two elements: Peace and Forgiveness.

- 1. Many of us carry wounds that have not yet been fully and totally forgiven.
- 2. Many of us are not living in the fullness God has for us because we are hanging on to unforgiveness.

B. So I am going to ask all of us to find a place to pray:

³ R. T. Kendall, [*Total Forgiveness: When Everything in You Wants to Hold a Grudge, Point a Finger, and Remember the Pain—god Wants You to Lay It All aside*](#) (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2010).

1. If you need forgiveness, confess your sin to God (and be specific).
 2. If you need to forgive someone, confess to God what they have done to you, how you feel about it, and then pray for help in forgiving them.
 3. If you desire more of God's peace in your life, ask for it.
- C. Let us pray not only for ourselves but for our families, community, and world.
1. Our world, our community, our family, and our church is hurting.
 2. Bitterness, envy, rage, anger are all attitudes we struggle with.
 3. Many around us are choosing to stay wounded even though God is offering healing.

The wonderful thing about the invitation of the Holy Spirit of God is that He doesn't say different things to different people. The Holy Spirit does not say two things—He says one thing! He says the same thing to all who are listening to Him. A. W. Tozer

- D. This season, God is inviting us all to go deeper with him.
- a. That begins with forgiveness.
 - b. Forgiveness from God, for ourselves, and for others.